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**Teaching Critical Thinking in Primary
Schools in Cyprus: A Collective Case Study**

By

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Institute of Education

University of Warwick

June 2015

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Declaration and Inclusion of Material from a Prior Thesis

The contents of this work are original. No part of it has been previously submitted to an academic institution as a requirement for a degree or diploma nor has it been previously published to the best of my knowledge. Any works that are referred to or cited in the present study are always accompanied with relevant bibliographical information.

A.Efthymiou

29/06/2015

Abstract

This case study explores the effects of participatory drama on groups of upper primary school students in Cyprus with the intention of enhancing their critical thinking. For the purposes of this research, a series of twenty-four drama workshops based on several drama contexts and stories were designed and carried out in three primary school classes, considered to be the three units of analysis of a collective case study. The research was also informed by elements of ethnography and reflective practice and explored the students' voices, choices, actions and general responses to the drama contexts and issues they were presented with. At the same time, this project looks at the students' and their teachers' considerations and reflections on the learning experiences and explores the students' stances and group decisions and how they related these to their real-life experiences and actions. The discussion of the findings focuses on what the research tells us about how drama might be considered important for children's critical thinking. The constraints which hindered this research are also presented while questions related to the potential of drama to achieve similar goals are proposed for further exploration.

List of Abbreviations

1) PC: Primary class

2) PS: Primary school

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

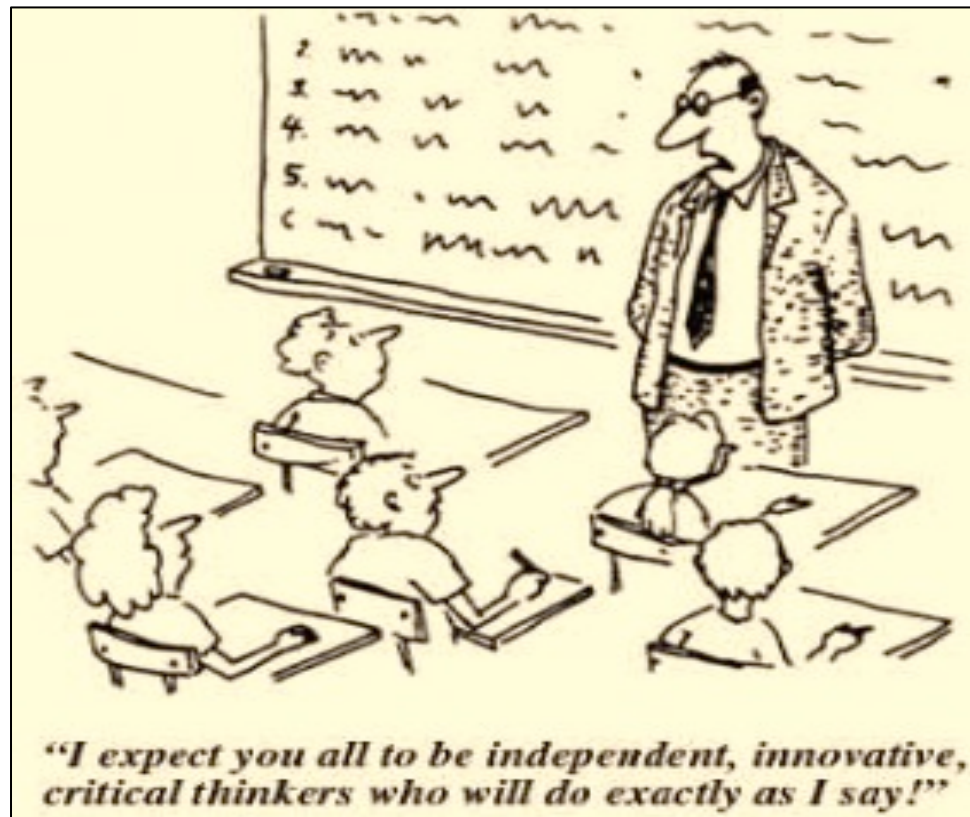


Figure 1: Comic illustration (cited in <http://briansblog.prioryca.org>)

1.1. Purpose of Research

"Children cannot wait; their name is 'Today'", Mistral (cited in Vasudeva *et al.*, 1994, p.60). Mistral's words suggest that these days, children should have the right to express themselves freely and be educated and supported in a way in which they can participate in decisions that affect both their present and future (*ibid*). As Seligman *et al.* (2007) argue, in this day and age we want more for our children than healthy bodies. Instead,

“[w]e want them to be eager to learn and be willing to confront challenges, [...] to grow up with confidence in the future, a love of adventure, [...] to be resilient in the face of the setbacks and failures that growing up always brings” (p.6).

Critical thinking is cited as a vital educational component by many educators, researchers and authors who claim that it should be a central educational aim at all levels. Critical thinking, they argue, is crucial for the development of the capacities, attitudes and personality that is necessary for children to act as energetic citizens who become aware of themselves, discover who they are and who they are becoming, take risks and overcome challenges (Lai, 2011; Marin & Halpern, 2011; Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007). To this end, a whole discourse of critical thinking has developed, generating at the same time debates, arguments, contradictory theories, concepts, definitions and approaches (Halpern, 2001; Lai, 2011; Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007). This attempt mostly concerns the post-secondary level, a stage that seems to be of special interest in the area of critical thinking; in fact, many instructors at this level (notably in the U.S.A) present workshops and write curriculum materials to offer public school teachers ideas on how to develop critical thinking programs. Two well-known examples are Richard Paul (1992), who looked at the ways in which critical thinking could be incorporated into the school curriculum, and Matthew Lipman (1980) and his colleagues, whose work is reflected in their *Philosophy for*

Children program¹. Yet, as Marin and Halpern (2011) observe, little occurs in schools in terms of empirical data of critical thinking instruction, while there is no agreement among experts on how to achieve this aim more effectively.

Relevant research results show that students fail to acquire critical thinking skills to the extent that they could and should develop them (Halpern, 1998; Paul, 1993). Specifically, the complex activities designed to enhance critical thinking in students could not be transferred to teaching practice or were rarely used (Paul, 1992, 1993), as they were routinely thought of as complementary material to traditional school subjects. It would appear that the reasons for this phenomenon were the lack of preparation on behalf of the teachers, the time factor and the volume of curriculum material and the fact that evaluations of students in school performance relied predominantly on reproductive knowledge. This was because guided answers are easier to predict and correct on a large scale and with more objectivity compared to those that involve critical thinking (*ibid*). In the same line of reasoning, Onosko (1991) discovered through his study of fifty-six social studies teachers that, apart from the transmission of knowledge as a central approach and the lack of time for teachers to prepare and apply critical thinking tasks, other barriers that may have influenced the enhancement of critical thinking were also the large number of students per

¹ “*Philosophy for Children is often described as a thinking skills programme or a course in critical and creative thinking. While it is true that philosophy for children does improve students’ critical and creative thinking skills, calling it a “thinking skills” programme does not do it justice. It does much more as well. [It] (...) builds on the students’ own wonder and curiosity about ideas that are vitally important to them (...) [and looks at matters that are] common, central and contestable concepts that underpin both our experience of human life and all academic disciplines. (..) The central pedagogical tool and guiding ideal of Philosophy for Children is the community of*

class and the fact that teachers had low expectations of their students and underestimated their potential to think critically.

Wright (2002) states that critical thinking does not happen in schools for two reasons: not only because of the broad variations of the term (for instance technical, instrumental or skilling approaches) but also because teachers are confused about the differing demands and messages regarding how to teach critical thinking. In fact, it is a moot point whether all teachers have the necessary abilities, dispositions and ethical beliefs or epistemology that are conducive to the use of critical thinking. Nonetheless, as he further argues, even if they do, some teachers are afraid of teaching debatable issues – especially in alternative ways – while the school environment diminishes the teaching of critical thinking. Emphasis is basically given on content coverage (rather than on deeper understanding of particular topics through the holistic engagement of students), and on standardised testing in the name of accountability (*ibid*).

In line with the above arguments, Hartley (2003) and Nussbaum (2010) observe that, in this era of globalisation, some concerned commentators have argued that education internationally has become subjected to the needs of the market, emphasising specialised knowledge and skills rather than the general holistic development of the student. Considering the consequences of that system on children's freedom of mind, my contention is that critical thinking should be a fundamental goal of learning in order to prepare reflective, thoughtful and energetic citizens. Contemporary official statements and curricula in Cyprus have set that target, however provisionally, as a combination of the two words *critical*

and *thinking*, although it has never exactly been clarified or explained how to enhance it; meanwhile, it is sometimes confused with the term *critical-literacy*. The resultant danger is that critical thinking may rarely be experienced and enhanced in students. Intriguingly, in a recent incident, policy makers set an open-ended exam question in the university entrance exams and students struggled to deal with it, complaining that the education system forced them to memorise knowledge instead of helping them enhance their critical thinking². This gap in the Cyprus curriculum and the general need for a thoroughly contextualised, qualitative inquiry on how drama might enhance critical thinking in primary school students were the focus of this study.

In this thesis, I will argue for an alternative approach to children's critical thinking, in the more affective and democratic context that drama can provide through artistic, playful and embodied experiences. Elaborating on my fieldwork, I will provide examples from the children's responses throughout the project and signpost evidence of their exercising critical thinking skills and attitudes in various ways.

² This refers to the teachers' and students' responses to the level of Pancyprian exams in Greek on Monday, 18th of May, 2015. For more details, see: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/05/20/our-view-furore-over-exam-question-highlights-union-mentality/>

1.2. Personal Interest in the Research

I grew up in a rural area in Limassol, Cyprus, and come from a large family of eight. When I was in the third grade, my parents, who were running a small fruit market in a central location in the city at the time, decided to enrol my three siblings and me in an urban school – as opposed to one in the rural area where we resided. Unlike our previous school, this new school boasted a higher academic level while the teachers were very well-qualified and displayed passion for the subjects they were teaching as well as love and attention towards the children. In total, I can honestly say that I had the privilege of having great primary school teachers who provided opportunities for us to develop various social skills, attitudes and modes of knowledge in alternative contexts, including the arts, albeit in a rather competitive and pressured environment.

This pressure for excellence was even greater later in high school and in the lyceum³. As the Cypriot educational system dictates, students of a particular primary school are automatically directed towards a corresponding high school and lyceum. What is more, the teaching conducted at high schools and lyceums follows traditional educational models whose main objective is limited to testing, grading, competition, and homework. Classwork was accompanied by the constant reminder of the need to study hard and perform well in order to be accepted as a valuable member of the school community and society as a whole and be professionally successful in the future. Much of the learning was based on memorisation while the model of the high achiever and well-behaved student was

³ upper secondary school

promoted. In retrospect, this model actually presupposed being confined in a chair and only being given the freedom to participate in the learning process by providing certain types of answers. The majority of the high school and lyceum teachers felt uncomfortable with their strict and mechanical approach, which was nonetheless necessary for covering the curriculum and for better controlling the class; unlike primary school teachers, some of their high school/lyceum counterparts displayed little passion for the subjects they were teaching and their interaction with students was minimal. The need for pleasure, creativity and critical thinking was underestimated; these teachers seemed to hold the misconception that these would either develop automatically or cannot be addressed on school premises. Ironically, critical thinking was one of the objectives of the Cyprus school curricula, but this was only provisional, since it depended on the teachers, most of whom showed no interest in approaching issues in alternative and “unsafe” ways.

My experience as a student at the Master’s Degree in Drama and Theatre Education at the University of Warwick showed me that there can be opportunities for insightful experiences related to engaging in and exploring alternative ways of teaching and learning based on playfulness, creativity and democratic processes. And this is because this course showed me what it feels like to be passionate about this area of study and how I could take advantage of my personal interests and skills in order to approach children as an educator. Essentially, it enhanced my view that playfulness is an inextricable element of learning and that knowledge and critical thinking cannot only be contextualised in a strict framework to develop

but, importantly, also within meaningful, stimulated, pleasurable environments. This Master's programme took me back to the primary school years when teachers were so inspiring and it reminded me of the reason I chose to be part of the educational system in Cyprus, namely to enable children to find school meaningful, not only in terms of knowledge, but primarily, in terms of enhancing their social skills, including their confidence and motivation. In a nutshell, this programme made me determined to find ways in which to make children want to attend school, rather than viewing it as a dull chore.

I was intrigued to engage in a doctoral research project that would hopefully explore what happens when using drama as a means of enhancing children's critical thinking in primary school children in Cyprus, the curricula of which – as mentioned above – do not offer much room for Arts and drama. Another contributing factor was my experience with the Arts and Drama Education in combination with the consideration of my role as a citizen, both at a universal and a local level, such as the context of Cyprus as it is shaped in the era of instrumentalisation and indoctrination. What I hope to have achieved through my research project is to have presented some of the ways in which drama can contribute towards the enhancement of several aspects of children's critical thinking in relation to the area of citizenship, the constraints found in the particular context that framed this attempt and the potential issues that emerged. In light of the evidence I found, I will argue in favour of drama being used not as a panacea for the gaps found in the educational system of Cyprus but as an alternative, democratic, playful approach to instrumental, traditional or technical programmes

designed to approach children's learning. Hopefully, the research findings will be of interest to educational experts and policy makers with ideas about using drama in the Cypriot and other curricula, either as a separate subject or as a medium in order to enrich critical thinking in children.

1.3. Research Questions

My research project was conducted in three primary schools located in different areas in Cyprus and involved 59 Greek-Cypriot nine-year-old children who participated in eight 80-minute drama workshops and in nine 80-minute interviews. Their teachers' comments were also recorded during three 80-minute interviews. I combined the methodologies of a collective case study research with three units of analysis, which were informed by the elements of ethnography and reflective practice to answer the question: *"What happens when I teach participatory drama to upper primary students in Cyprus with the intention of enhancing their critical thinking?"* Additional related sub-questions, included:

- "How can critical thinking be framed by drama conventions?"
- "How can I, the teacher, shape drama pedagogy to engage students' critical thinking?"
- "How can I, the teacher, use stories in order to engage students' critical thinking?"
- "How do students respond to the process? Why did they respond in this

way?”

- “How can we recognise instances of critical thinking in drama as they are happening?”
- “Is there any evidence that some children think more critically when they are emotionally engaged?”

My role was that of an active participant practitioner-researcher and the research methods used were observation, interviews, practitioner’s reflective journal, comments and notes from critical friends and drama conventions as research tools. The context of research and the methodological issues will be discussed in detail in Chapters III and IV respectively.

1.4. Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters.

Chapter I, which is the introduction to the topic, presents the rationale of the thesis; my personal interests in this research; its importance, as well the research questions.

In **Chapter II**, I focus on the Literature Review of the definitions, concepts and theoretical ideas of critical thinking and in relation to critical pedagogy as well as to Theatre and drama.

Chapter III deals with the context of the research and specifically the sample of

the study, the teachers' professional background and contribution, the school premises (their use and overall impact) and the changes of plan due to practical constraints.

In **Chapter IV**, I review my research methodology and the research methods I employed in my project as well as their limitations. In addition, I elaborate on triangulation, the issue of validity, the ethical considerations and the strategies of data coding, analysis and interpretation that are pertinent to this research project.

Chapter V features my findings as analysed, interpreted and informed by theoretical concepts placing emphasis on the potential of drama pedagogy in the enhancement of critical thinking in children and the constraints which emerged.

In **Chapter VI** I offer my concluding remarks by summarising the findings of my research project and its limitations, as well as offering the potential value of this research for others and forwarding suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The importance of critical thinking in education as well as its impact on students' emotional, social and personal development has been extensively discussed in the literature; hailed as a kind of promised land by numerous educators, philosophers and psychologists, it is often claimed to transform learners from passive vessels of knowledge into well-adapted citizens, adept at dealing with various tasks effectively (Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007, p.604). Increasingly, advocates of critical thinking have attempted to approach the concept in different ways, developing discourses, debates and conflicting theories as to the definition of critical thinking or what it can potentially generate.

My contention is that, although critical thinking in education seems to be an essential goal, the available approaches to its implementation are not in-depth enough; rather, they merely explain the term but not what kind of purpose critical thinking is supposed to serve and how this can be accomplished. Besides, the focus of those theories, approaches and terms is limited solely on a person's mental process while ignoring the impact of the body in critical thinking engagement. I also argue that, apart from the work of Boal and Brecht's line of *Verfremdungseffekte* (alienation/defamiliarisation) in theatre, there is very little in the literature on the idea that critical thinking can be enhanced through drama. It

is these limitations that I attempt to address in this chapter while exploring the areas of critical thinking, pedagogy, drama and theatre education.

2.2. Structure of the Literature Review

This chapter aims to present the conceptual and theoretical framework of my research through the exploration of issues related to the importance of critical thinking in education and society as expressed by key philosophers, such as Socrates, Aristotle and Descartes. Also, it discusses different approaches towards critical thinking in education in terms of pedagogy, philosophy, generic skills, strategies and habits of mind. In addition, the connection between embodied learning and critical thinking enhancement is also examined, by elaborating on concepts such as these of *reflexivity*, as explored by various current philosophers, and of *habitus* within the context Bourdieu offers. The chapter also presents how theatre practitioners such as Brecht and Boal attempted to cultivate critical thinking through theatre education, and in what ways critical pedagogy and drama pedagogy can enhance students' critical thinking.

The literature review concludes with the conceptual and theoretical framework of my research.

2.3. Approaches to Critical Thinking by Key Philosophers

How critical thinking has been perceived has been associated with philosophical underpinnings in humanities and education, while Western assumptions about the individual and society, the mind and the body influence ways in which theoretical and research paradigms are developed and delivered (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Scheper-Hudges & Lock, 1987). Considering the conflicts within the concept of critical thinking in education I have deemed it important to examine approaches by the most influential theorists, philosophers and pedagogues of the distant and recent past who have most clearly shaped the ways in which citizenship, mind and body are perceived and applied towards critical thinking.

2.3.1. Views on Critical Thinking as an Act of Intellect: Socrates, Aristotle and Descartes

The philosophical and intellectual roots of critical thinking are first encountered in the teaching practice and vision of the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, 2,500 years ago. Socrates pioneered a method of questioning aimed at people who could not rationally justify their arguments and could not acknowledge the prejudices they may have held or the ways in which these may influence their way of thinking, regardless of their position, power or authority. For him, all vice is the result of ignorance and no person is willingly bad, whereas virtue is

knowledge; therefore, people who seek inquiry, truth and knowledge develop the potential to act properly and rightly (Ahbel-Rappe & Kamtekar, 2009).

Socrates was the first to propose that critical thinking is not just another educational option; rather, he maintained, it is an indispensable part of education that leads to the moral injunction of respect for individuals (*ibid*). According to him, “*the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being*” (*ibid*, p.229), therefore, everybody should challenge their own common sense and use language in order to inquire, examine and clarify their actions, thoughts and beliefs. His method of inquiry is generally known as “Socratic questioning” (*ibid*) and is the best known critical thinking teaching strategy used to ask deep questions that dig deeply into thinking before people accept ideas as worthy of belief. The questioning look for evidence closely reviews reasoning and assumptions, analyses basic views and concepts, and outlines implications both of what is said and what takes place (*ibid*).

The inquiry develops interactively, and the teacher is not only a guide of the dialogical discussions, but also an equal participant of it (*ibid*). The substance of Socratic inquiry is not what is said or believed about world matters in general, but the exploration of each participant’s underlying values and beliefs in connection with the coherence of their lives and how one ought to live as a good and ethical citizen (*ibid*). In Socrates’ words, as cited in Plato’s *Gorgias*: “*Do not take what I say as if I were merely playing, for you see the subject of our discussion — and on what subject should even a man of slight intelligence be more*

serious? — namely, what kind of life should one live . . .” (Plato’s Gorgias, as cited in Hamilton & Cairns, 1961, p.283).

Socrates’ practice was also intertwined with the critical thinking approaches of Aristotle, who emphasised that things may be different from what they appear to be and that only the trained minds are prepared to scratch the veneer (delusive appearances) and discover truth (the deeper reality of life). Aristotle invented and suggested a more logical method towards critical thinking based on rules of reasoning (validity rules), namely syllogism: “*a discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows from necessity*” (Aristotle, trans. 1961b, 24a18-22, emphasis added, cited in Thayer-Bacon, 2000, p.23); in other words, pairs of proposals that, taken together, help thinkers test their ideas, have a critical stance towards knowledge and events, create new knowledge when necessary and draw inferences. In his logic, Aristotle distinguished between dialectic and analytic. He revealed the need for people to be critical thinkers on the basis of understanding the deeper realities through systematic thinking and the act of drawing deep and broad implications; he claimed that only comprehensive and well-reasoned thinking that is grounded on sound arguments and is responsive to objections can take them beyond the surface of provisional debates (*ibid*).

French philosopher Descartes attempted to apply the rational deductive methods of science, and particularly of mathematics, to philosophy (Cottingham et al., 1985). In his book “*Rules for the Direction of mind*”, Descartes argued for a special systematic disciplining of the mind to guide it in thinking through

questioning, doubt, and testing for the purposes of reaching the truth (ibid). Descartes' famous words "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("*I think, therefore I am*") (Quoted in Cottingham *et. al.*, 1985, p.140) was the foundation stone on which he attempted to discover truth and build a complete system of certain knowledge in the context of scepticism: to doubt everything that he believed to be true and examine if it was possible to doubt it (i.e. if you can doubt it, it must exist) (ibid).

2.3.2. Mind and Body Issues and the Implementations on Critical Thinking

While Socrates was primarily concerned with the mind and linguistic clarity, he also advocated the importance of cultivating our somata, which he considered as essential tools for all human attainments. In *Conversations of Socrates*, it is said that:

"The body is valuable for all human activities, and in all its uses it is very important that it should be as fit as possible. Even in the act of thinking, which is supposed to require less assistance from the body, everyone knows that serious mistakes often happen through physical ill-health" (Xenophon, *Conversations of Socrates*1:153, 163, cited in Shusterman, 2006, p.8).

In a more emphatic argument, Aristotle highlights that critical thinking is not only about the use of minds and words, but that it rather is about "*a holistic human activity*" (Robinson, 1978, p.1) that involves a combination of attitudes,

emotions, linguistic skill and logical proficiency (*ibid*). According to Aristotle, critical thinking is expressed through a healthy body, as well as through emotions – particularly, empathy. Aristotle valued the virtue of empathy, because it helps people understand how other people think and feel, thus it encourages individuals to be open to possibilities and alternatives and be able to “*communicate*” (*ibid*) with them. In this vein, the Aristotelian position would be that, when designing their teaching, educators should consider that reason cannot be divorced from emotion and thus, to think critically is not to retreat to the realm of pure reason (Heinaman, 1990; Robinson, 1978).

Descartes, on the other hand, was responsible for changing the route of western thought into a different direction; contrary to Aristotle, he argued that mind and body are separate and distinct insofar as the mind is capable of thinking while the body is not. According to Descartes, sensation and human perception of reality are the source of untruth and illusions, with the only reliable truth being the existence of a metaphysical mind; this mind is capable of interacting with a physical body, but cannot exist on the same physical plane as that of the body (Hoffman, 2009). Descartes has been highly influential on many taken-for-granted assumptions that since developed in western thought about the split of mind from the body, according to which the body, its senses and desires are instruments that mislead people’s judgement and distract their attention from the truth (*ibid*). Based on this argumentation, his fellow philosophers, especially humanist thinkers, focused merely on the mind and considered it important to emphasise language and rationality as the distinguishing essentials for humans to be critically

conscious of themselves, while they neglected to perceive the body as a universal and sensing soma (Macintyre-Latta & Buck, 2008).

This approach began to shift recently when contemporary thinkers subjected the above theories to critique while they argued in favour of the necessity of the body for all human sense making and positioned it in an “intertwining” state (Bresler, 2004; Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Noddings, 1992; Sidorkin, 2002); “[body] is the storm-center, the origin of coordinates, the constant place of stress in [our] experience-train” (James, 1976, p.86). Essentially, in a world where the body may be taken for granted or be abused, harmed or underestimated due to ever-increasing technological inventions, bodily skills and capacities define the limits of people’s freedom, ethical thinking, choices, commitments, objectives and perceptions, and indicate what to expect from the others (Dewey, 1938; Macintyre-Latta & Buck, 2008). Shusterman (2006) extends James’ argument further, arguing that all the world’s objects, energies, and regularities are incorporated in the body directly and practically from a position that settles and directs our horizons of meanings (left and right, up and down, forward and backward, inside and outside) in both realistic and metaphorical ways (*ibid*, p.6-7). In his words:

“[...]ethics implies choice, which in turn implies freedom to choose and act on that choice. We cannot act without bodily means, even if these means are reduced (through the wonders of technology) to pressing a button or blinking an eye to implement our choice of action” (Shusterman, 2006, p.6).

More importantly, according to Shusterman,

“the soma supplies [a] primordial point of view through its location both in the spatiotemporal field and in the field of social interaction” (ibid, p.7).

Zarrilli (1995) points out that the paradigmatic shift in approaching the body in relation to mind, thinking and experience was achieved mainly through the work of Merleau-Ponty in his book: *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). Zarrilli's (1995) comments are worth citing here at length:

“Merleau-Ponty challenged the Cartesian cogito and asserted the primacy of the lived experience in the constitution of meaning. This phenomenology eloquently (re)claimed the centrality of the body and embodied experience as the locus for ‘experience as it is lived in a deepening awareness’ (Levine, 1985:62). He rejected the exclusive assumption of the natural sciences and modern psychology that treated the body as a thing, object, instrument, or machine under the command and control of an all-knowing mind” (Zarrilli, 1995, p.13).

In his arguments about the account of human body, Merleau-Ponty (1962) challenges all philosophical positions that conceptualise body as a “scientific object” (*ibid*, p.3) that is separated from humans' ontologically distinct consciousness. Conversely, he identifies the subjectivity of humans with their consciousness for, human “being-in-the-world” (p.440) is a bodily being and thus, the human body is itself a “subject” (*ibid*), and the human subject is unavoidably,

not just conditionally, embodied. As he explains, either in the context of certain performing skills or in people's general everyday dealings with the world, people need to acknowledge that it is their bodies' deliberations and understandings that guide them towards what to do and how to do it. In other words, the link between "meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.140), a concept which includes such elements as intention, objective, understanding, direction/directedness, importance, and the body is increasingly being made. This "*praktognostic*" (*ibid*) body is in fact what connects the human subject with the world:

"Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge [i.e. intellectualist, theoretical 'knowledge']; it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a "praktognosia", which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary" (ibid).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) also refers to the inextricable relationship between the body and mind stating that consciousness is in the first place not a matter of "*I think that*" (p.137) but of "*I can*" (*ibid*):

"I can therefore take my place, through the medium of my body as the potential source of familiar actions, in my environment conceived as a set of manipulanda and without, moreover, envisaging my body or my surrounding as objects (...). There is my arm seen as sustaining familiar acts, my body as giving rise to determinate action having a field or scope known to me in advance ['practically' known, by the body itself], there are my surroundings as a collection of possible points upon which this bodily action may operate...." (ibid, p.105).

The issue of the body, mind and experience attracted the attention of the fields of cultural politics and feminism in relation to issues of race and gender, such as Butler's (1988; 1994) theory on performativity of gender. These fields of study considered the human body as "*an intentionally organized materiality*" (Butler, 1988, p.156) which "*is always an embodying of possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention*" (*ibid*), challenging concepts of identity in terms of personality development and gender. As Butler (1988; 1994) explains, from a very early age, children can actively embody certain cultural and historical possibilities they experience; also, they develop their thinking and identity as it is shaped through the gendered characteristics they have adopted. This perspective, which is connected with Bourdieu's theory of habitus, will be discussed in a later section⁴.

2.3.3. Summary

In this section, I have attempted to present the most influential philosophical theories by Socrates, Aristotle and Descartes on the way critical thinking is perceived as an act of intellect and the way these theories informed or have been challenged by more current theories, which view critical thinking as an embodied performance. In the next section I will look at the main current approaches towards critical thinking that place emphasis on key technical-rational aspects, and the shortcomings of those approaches. I will also explain the reasons

⁴ More extensive analysis on Butler's theory can be found in the analysis chapter.

for rejecting these approaches in favour of a more affective and democratic context which relates to the wider aims of this study.

2.4. Current Approaches towards Critical Thinking

While critical thinking has always been a popular topic and is currently the focus of many educational, philosophical, psychological and social research projects, Flores *et al.* (2012) argue that the term “*critical thinking*” is not very definitive in the literature because it is currently spread so thinly that it is difficult to know just what it is. Nosich (2005) claims that the definitions found in literature are different from each other due to the association of critical thinking with all human abilities. However, as Moon (2007) explains, these definitions are not necessarily fixed; a person might adopt a combination of approaches in order to define or even, cultivate critical thinking.

The purpose of this section is to portray how critical thinking is framed through several definitions and approaches in the current literature on education. My intention is to distance myself from the established frameworks, make sense of a complex field of ideas and to subject possible conceptions to critical scrutiny. To this end and under the umbrella of certain categories of approaches, I will refer to key philosophers who developed their own theories and have been highly influential in the area of critical thinking, such as Robert Ennis, Richard Paul, John McPeck and Harvey Siegel. At the same time, I will present the criticism of those

theories and the conception of critical thinking I have adopted for the purposes of this research.

2.4.1. Approaches towards Critical Thinking related to Generic Skills and Instructional Processes

A very prevalent approach to critical thinking is that of evolving a set of generic thinking skills that “*underpin all reasonable thought, which can be isolated and inculcated through courses concerned with their development*” (Winch & Gingell, 1999, p.145). These skills or processes, as Moon (2007) explains further, seem necessary when it comes to the presentation of an idea as coherent, usable and applicable in practice. Theories that fit into this approach agree at the abstract level of discussion, that is, the successful performance; however, they differ in the detail when it comes to a more concrete and practical definition in terms of skills, processes and abilities (Bailin *et al.*, 1999; Winch & Gingell, 1999; Moon, 2007).

Ennis, a renowned contributor in the field of critical thinking, was probably the first who introduced this form of thinking in the current literature (Fisher, 2001, p.2); his concepts of critical thinking are mainly based on particular skills such as observing, inferring, generalising, reasoning, evaluating and as such, according to the first definition he gave, critical thinking is “*the correct assessing of statements*” (Ennis, 1962, p.83). This conceptualisation was revised later on for, as he stated in his article “*Critical thinking assessment*” (Ennis, 1993), this

definition was vague and suffered from dismissing the creative attributes of critical thinking, such as the consideration of possibilities and alternatives and the creation of plans, hypotheses and definitions (Ennis, 1993, p.180).

In order to reduce any puzzlement and misunderstandings, Ennis developed a new definition according to which critical thinking is “*the reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do*” (Fisher, 2001, p.2). Again, his definition seems to be unconvincing for some educators and philosophers such as Alston (2001) and Blake *et al.* (1998), who consider this skilling perspective as inadequate and problematic since it reduces education solely to a goal-oriented and purposive rationality.

For Fisher (2001), being a good critical thinker is to be able to review someone else’s argument following a sequence of “*fundamental critical thinking skills*” (*ibid*, p.8). As such, the critical thinker has to identify and evaluate reasons, assumptions, arguments and conclusions of different kinds; clarify and interpret ideas and expressions; judge the acceptability and the credibility of ideas; draw inferences; analyse and produce arguments and explanations (*ibid*). Here, it is important to note that all these components are also found within the chapters of Fisher’s (2001) book “*Critical thinking, an introduction*”, whereas the headings of these chapters are gathered and presented in the form of a “*thinking map*” (*ibid*, p.56) for “*Skilful analysis of arguments*” (*ibid*), which I quote here verbatim:

“1.What is/are the main conclusion(s)? (may be stated or unstated; may be recommendations, explanations, and so on. Conclusion indicator words and ‘therefore’ test may help).

2. *What are the reasons (data, evidence) and their structure?*
3. *What is assumed? (that is implicit or taken for granted, perhaps in the context).*
4. *Clarify the Meaning (by the terms, claim of arguments)”.*

(Fisher, 2001, p.56)

Fisher’s approach seems to derive from what another influential theorist in the area of critical thinking, Benjamin Bloom, suggested, namely the introduction of his own taxonomy of thinking, “Bloom’s taxonomy” (Bloom *et al.*, 1956). Bloom claimed that education should move students to the upper levels of thinking, that is, to learn and think better by helping them manipulate knowledge and organise information in such a way that they can do more with it. In order to do so, he approached critical thinking as a gathering of six processes-levels, namely **knowledge** (displaying previously learnt material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts and answers); **comprehension** (demonstrating understanding of facts and ideas by organising, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions and stating main ideas); **application** (solving problems by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way); **analysis** (examining and breaking information into parts by identifying motives or causes; making inferences and finding evidence to support generalisations); **synthesis** (compiling information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions) and **evaluation** (presenting and

defending opinions by making judgements about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria) (*ibid*).

In this context of skilling approach, Halpern (2003) indicates that critical thinking is the use of these cognitive skills mainly concerned with performativity and effectiveness. As such, critical thinking,

“is used to describe thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed – the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions” (Halpern, 2003, p.6).

2.4.1.1. Arguments against the Skilling Perspective: the Problem with Performativity and the Need for Context

Kalman (2002) believes that critical thinking skills are essential for students’ need *“to go beyond the simple assimilation of their experiences into their own models and instead undergo conceptual change”* (p.84). However, as Alston (2001), Bailin (2002), Papastephanou and Angeli (2007) warn, a person cannot be considered as a critical thinker because he/she just achieves goals or carries out an action successfully. As Bailin (2002) admits, theorisations of critical thinking related merely to mental processes and procedural moves should be scrutinised due to the mechanistic and repetitive model they imply. In her words, *“simply carrying out a set of procedures is not sufficient to ensure critical thinking, since*

any procedure can be carried out carelessly, superficially, or unreflectively – in other words, in an uncritical manner” (ibid, p.363).

Moon (2007) accepts that some identifiable skills and processes may be components of critical thinking, however, she believes that the way of putting them in certain lists and teaching them separately, following a sequence, is not what critical thinking is about. In her words,

“Lists of skills of critical thinking are presumably written by those who can think critically – so a list is essentially written in retrospect. In effect, they are lists of what a critical thinker does to think critically, and it may be that we learn in a more organic manner, not by an accumulation of a set of skills” (ibid, p.55).

Contrary to the approaches concerning critical thinking as a set of generic skills, McPeck (1981) suggested that a critical thinker should have a comprehensive knowledge of the field he/she is looking at, including its content and epistemology. In his words,

“thinking, critical thinking, is always about some particular thing or subject, and that it therefore makes little or no sense to say ‘I teach thinking simpliciter’ or ‘I teach in general, but not about anything in particular” (ibid, p.19).

Similarly, McPeck (1981) and Hinchliffe (2002) believe that the majority of activities requiring skills involve something more than the exercise of mere technique; that is, a suitable theoretical framework is needed for the understanding

and interpretation of the skills applied (Hinchliffe, 2002, p.188). In his attempt to retrieve the notion of skill from the effectiveness context, Hinchliffe (2002) claimed that many critics of skills remain in the logic of instrumental rationality and fail to see that what is problematic are not the skills as such but the framework. As he explains, these people define skills in an independent context, as repetitive operations leading to successful performance with a measurable outcome. However, this is a misconception because:

“skills are learnt in a context and are deployed in a context. The context, or background, gives the skill its purpose or point. Thus, whether a skill is performed more or less well depends not only on whether particular techniques have been mastered, but also on whether the particular context has been appropriately understood”(Hinchliffe, 2002, p.190).

In a similar line of argument, Willingham (2007) argues that critical thinking is not a skill of any sort; in fact, it is not a skill at all. According to him, critical thinking is not applicable at any time as other skills are; instead, it is intertwined with specific domain knowledge and as such, it is non-transferable across disciplines. Mulnix (2010) considers Willingham’s argument as lacking depth because, from her point of view, although data related to any given context is important, students do not have to rely exclusively on it; instead, to develop critical thinking, they will have to scratch the surface, make inferences or engage in other complex processes.

2.4.2. Approaches to Critical Thinking through Reason, Assessment, Rationality, Logic and Specific Criteria

Siegel (1990) points out that both subject-neutral and subject-specific principles and skills are important to critical thinking, however, they are so in terms of reason assessment; a critical thinker has the ability to assess reasons, beliefs, arguments and actions in the light of logical and epistemic criteria and as such, to be “*appropriately moved by reasons*” (1990, p.38):

“[The] *critical thinker must be able to assess reasons and their ability to warrant beliefs, claims and actions properly. Therefore, the critical thinker must have a good understanding of, and the ability to utilize, both subject-specific and subject-neutral (logical) principles governing the assessment of reasons*” (Siegel, 1990, p.38).

Mason (2007) discusses Siegel’s argument stating that the latter followed Scheffer’s approach according to which, reasons and the principles of consistency, impartiality, fairness and arbitrariness are conceptually inextricable (Mason, 2007, p.342). By the same token, Vaughn (2005) stated that critical thinking is systematic due to the distinct set of procedures and methods it is based on. In his words,

“*Critical thinking [is] the systematic evaluation or formulation of beliefs, or statements, by rational standards*” and “*operates according to [those] standards in that beliefs are judged by how well they are supported by reasons*” (Vaughn, 2005, p.4).

Similarly to Vaughn (2005), Petress (2004) seems to conceive critical thinking as a set of rational criteria and, in his view, if a person meets these criteria, he/she reasons well. For both Vaughn (2005) and Petress (2004), the application of those criteria of critical thinking makes somebody a critical thinker and as such, there is no need for them to have metacognitive awareness or to habitually be disposed to thinking critically.

On the other hand, Moon (2007) observes that logic has been the main method associated with critical thinking and objectivity in the past. As Edward deBono (1982) explained, that was because “*most schools [equated] thinking with logic [and used it as a tool to show] what is implicit in the concepts used [in arguments] and to expose contradiction*” (p.77). However, according to Moon (2007), the current literature seems to offer a more general definition of critical thinking that accepts logic as part of, but not as the sole component of it.

In the same vein, Flew (1975) argued that nowadays it does not seem necessary to familiarise students with the terminology of exercises of logic or its disciplinary structures. Rather, he considers it important to acknowledge and apply in practice some valuable qualities of thinking that logic lays emphasis on – that is, the systematic approach to a problem, the stress on persistence and the requirement for clarity and precision. For this to be possible, Flew (1975) maintains, students should admit the quality of the language used in the construction or analysis of any argument, and by extension, the meanings and assumptions that words, sentences and arguments offer.

Bailin (2002) proposes a “*justifiable conception*” (p.368) of critical thinking that “*is explicitly normative, focusing on the adherence to criteria and standards*” (*ibid*). For her,

“[c]ritical thinking [should occur] in response to a particular task, question, problematic situation or challenge, including solving problems, evaluating theories, conducting inquiries, interpreting works, and engaging in creative task, and such challenges always arise in particular contexts” (ibid).

2.4.2.1. Arguments against the Perspectives through Rationality, Logic and Specific Criteria

There seems to be a general consensus in the existing literature that approaches to critical thinking that are rule-bound or involve logic contradict with important aspects of critical thinking – namely autonomy, in combination with the willingness and confidence to challenge rules (Moon, 2007; Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007). In addition, contrary to the notion that logical arguments are to be considered as correct, deBono (1983) and Papastephanou and Angeli (2007) claim that something may be very “logical”, however, not at all in accordance with a main principle of critical thinking, that is, there is not only one “right” answer or approach towards something.

Following the tradition of trying to achieve the single “right” answer or holding the view that the only thing critical thinkers need is to mechanically

memorise and apply some guidelines required for the development of an argument, as, for example, Vaughn (2005) and Petress (2004) maintain, Mulnix (2010) concludes that we reinstate a form that traditional education maintains, that is, the content knowledge or the “*knowing what*” (2010, p.468).

Chan and Yan (2008) do, however, criticise this approach claiming that reasoning or critical thinking is not a homogeneous phenomenon, and that there are different ways or forms of reasoning. According to them, these are often adaptive strategies in response to particular problems in human life. Thus, when cultivating critical thinking in students, the latter should be taught to be more aware of the natural and cultural contexts in which their thinking is embedded, so that they might become more sensitive to their own ways of thinking and thus less likely to mishandle them or reach hasty judgements.

In a similar line of argument, Papastephanou and Angeli (2007) seem to extend the above argument when it comes to discuss Bailin’s emphasis on criteriology. According to them, the use of criteria and how it varies according to the context may lead to a mechanistic framework once more. As they explain, “*proficiency at employing appropriate criteria each time betrays sensitivity to context and flexibility, but is hardly adequate for turning reflectively to the criteria themselves*”(p.616). Thus, they warn that normative is not objective and any attempt to tie down critical thinking to specific criteria, however sensitively done, is open to justifiable critique.

2.4.3. Approaches towards Critical Thinking as a Way of Being and as an Affective Pedagogical Citizenship Competence

Various theories treat critical thinking as an entity in itself, as a process based on skills, criteria, logic and arguments that are switched into operation and rationality. Alongside these, there are some other approaches which have been formed in a less structural way and that involve a more pedagogical developmental progression. The latter views the students' personal attributes, habits, interests, motivation and general dispositions as necessary to provide them with a particular positioning towards their learning, personal assumptions, beliefs, actions and general life experiences (Brookfield, 1987; Meyers, 1986). In this way, the state of critical being is a disposition – a way of viewing, feeling and working in and with the world (Barnett, 1997).

Brookfield (1987) argues in favour of approaches which “[try] to awaken, prompt, nurture and encourage this process” (p.11) instead of adopting the rational and operational ones. As he explains,

“[...] trying to force people to analyse critically the assumptions under which they have been thinking and living is likely to serve no function other than intimidating them to the point where resistance builds up against this process” (ibid).

In the same line of reasoning Coles and Robinson (1991) promote the notion of critical thinking as a dispositional way of being in the world claiming that to think critically, one should demonstrate certain positive attributes of

identity, such as “[...] *respect for persons, readiness to consider alternative explanations, care for the procedures of inquiry, readiness to listen to others, a habit of judicious suspension of assent and a habit of self-appraisal*” (*ibid*, p.13).

Critical thinking in these terms entails a change in personal identity, in the way one thinks, acts and presents oneself to oneself and to others in terms of taking decisions, making choices, knowing the reasons behind them, respecting others, interacting with them and exchanging ideas and, thereby forming their own views, and making them known (*ibid*).

Dam and Volman (2004) claim that critical thinking is not just a matter of obtaining skills and knowledge but the ability to consider oneself as part of a community of practice, take responsibility for one’s actions and make contributions (involving the use of both skills and knowledge) in that position. As Kershner *et al.* (2013) extend further, the combination of questioning power towards given knowledge and social structures and the attitudes of commitment and empathy are intrinsic features of critical thinking. As they explain, human beings come into existence as live, physical, sensing entities that progressively develop their thinking and obtain personhood attributes, such as consciousness and intentionality, through their socially constructed, embodied experience, intuition, dispositions and emotions.

2.4.4. Approaching the Concepts of Habitus and Reflexivity in relation to Critical Thinking Cultivation

Education and its instruments, namely schools, have often been defined as systems in which the values and culture of the dominant classes are reproduced, thus sustaining the classified structures of power relations in the wider society. It is argued that this is achieved through the transmission of *habitus*, that is, the cultivation of certain dispositions in students, teachers and policy makers engendering specific practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1998, p.22). Taking this into consideration, it is of interest to identify the impact the habitus might have on the process of critical thinking enhancement in primary school students. One of the driving aims behind this study is to illustrate the trajectory of the related theoretical exploration that will be undertaken in the rest of this chapter. I intend to do this by employing Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the arguments against the objectivity of this approach as well as the supplementary theoretical perspectives in response to issues related to socialisation, embodiment – elaborating on the reference to the body noted above – and reflexivity as dominant notions of thinking cultivation and personality development. It is these that I will later argue as central objectives of drama education.

2.4.4.1. The Construction of Habitus

Bourdieu (1990) uses the concept of habitus as the basis of his theoretical framework in order to explain how social reproduction appears and why change is

hard to achieve. He defines habitus as situated in traditions, routine and life conditions, as well as adopted and internalised in mind and body where it is demonstrated in action and particularly, in the way we express and carry ourselves. As Wacquant (2005) maintains, habitus is “*the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them*” (p.316). These normally unconscious aspects of habitus are noteworthy in relation to drama education and the rationale of this study, where the conscious use of spoken language, inner dialogue, body language, interpretation and action are central.

According to Bourdieu (1984), habitus is not formulated freely, nor settled by structures; instead, it is created and reproduced unconsciously “*without any conscious concentration*” and “*without any deliberate pursuit of coherence*” (p.170) while it is formulated by people’s past conditions, and mainly those shaped in childhood, in conjunction with actual experiences to guide people’s minds and actions here and now. In his book “*The Logic of Practice*”, Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as a construct that relates to, yet at the same time transcends, habitual daily routines and early experiences which define the way we perceive society and socially fabricated concepts and norms. In Bourdieu’s (1990) words, “*the habitus – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product*” (p.56). Thus it is meant that habitus has a tendency for safeguarding its consistency by denying change or any new information and, as such, it causes

perseverance of the status quo and the social class (*ibid*). In Osterlind's (2008) words,

“[t]he concept of habitus exceeds the dichotomy of determinism and free will [as well as,] paradoxes like why ever-shifting, unpredictable social practices always repeat themselves” (p.74).

While individual histories of habitual daily routines and early experiences are essential in working out the concept of habitus, it is important to note that it is a multilevel concept with distinct, complex notions that vary from person to person, as Bourdieu (1990) suggested. For him, *“the subject is not the instantaneous ego of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history” (ibid, p.91).* Thus, habitus not only consists of individual histories and trajectories but importantly, of collective ones, as part of social processes and practices (as a site of struggle or competition for power, recognition and legitimacy) and especially those related to early experiences constructed in the context of families (*ibid*).

In his speech entitled: *“Habitus and Social Inequalities in Education”*, Goldthorpe (2010) stated that Bourdieu referred to a habitus that is embedded in more decisive, non-modified contexts, such as those of physiology and neurology, and dismissed the impact of alternative agencies of socialisation or re-socialisation of habitus within fields other than family. While referring to Aquinas' two types of habitus, *“habitus corporis”* (habitus of the body) (Bourdieu, 1984, p.3) and *habitus animae* (habitus of the mind) (*ibid*), Bourdieu (1984) claimed that they are equal, unlike both Aquinas and Goldthorpe (2010), who advocate that habitus

corporis performs functions which are below the level of consciousness and, as such, cannot be adapted. On the contrary, according to Bourdieu (1984), *habitus animae* can indeed be modified despite its form and construction within the family context. In his own words, “[people] often move away from the religious or the political beliefs and practices that they acquired from their families in their childhood” (p.3).

2.4.4.2. Habitus and the Role of Reflexivity in Introspection

On the basis that the primary structures of *habitus* function below the level of consciousness and language and especially, “*beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will*” (*ibid*, p.446), Bourdieu (1984) argues *habitus* as something which is internalised by people in such a thorough way that, they become “*habitus carriers*” or “*structural vessels*” (Kemp, 2010, p.6). As Jenkins (1992) observes, Bourdieu approaches the body “[as] a mnemonic device upon and in which the very basis of culture, the practical tendencies of *habitus* are imprinted and encoded” (p.75-76). In this vein, people’s actions are driven by a spontaneity based on their habitual dispositions to simply react, and not think about the appropriateness, consistency and consequences of their actions (*ibid*). Accordingly, there is a limitation of any potential degree of autonomy or reflexivity, defined as “*self-analysis, self-confrontation*” (Beck, 1994, p.5) or as the “*reflexive monitoring of action and its contexts*” (Giddens, 1990, p.36) as embedded in real life. Considering the importance of autonomy and reflexivity as

essential aspects of critical thinking in combination with the knowledge habitus brings on how and why people act in the way they do within specific contexts, I will elaborate further on the emergent need for bringing together those two concepts, as explained below.

Following Cristian Kemp's (2010) statement, reflexivity opens up possibilities of learning through experiences that help people to "*update their subjective expectations of external objective realities*" (p.10), in other words, to interact within different social contexts and feel confident to question their previous beliefs, the values underpinning their aspirations and the objectivity that characterises their behaviour. This does not mean that the impact of structure in people's behaviour is neglected; rather, it continues to have power on its own, albeit in a way that leaves space for reflexivity to affect their choices and actions (*ibid*).

Beck (2002) observes that, whilst in contemporary society children keep on adopting a matrix of cultural dispositions, and especially, their related corporeal forms – the ones that Bourdieu discusses – these dispositions are broader in scope, more flexible and far less determining or domineering than they were before and during the middle of the 20th century. As Archer (2006) puts it, when children learn knowledge and develop skills that their families could not have known or needed, the pivotal influence of habitus is noticeably challenged by the rapid speed at which all aspects of the world they live in are modified from one generation to another. In this sense, whilst the structuring power of habitus is still important, reflexivity is essential if children are to realise their right to control their own

actions and destinies and to challenge what they subjectively perceive and what they objectively encounter when interacting and engaging with others (*ibid*).

According to Archer (2007), reflexivity, “*the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa*” (p.4) arises out of a need to deal with challenges related to real issues and it is expressed through internal dialogues or conversations, in which humans consider and question, if needed, their lives, attitudes and values in relation to the world they live in. In the context of drama education, I propose that the concept of habitus is important in terms of understanding and revealing secret silences related to the way children think and approach certain issues. What is more, I have approached the concept of reflexivity as a pivotal parameter, not only in terms of enhancing critical thinking but also with regard to informing and shaping this research. Archer’s (2007) process of “*internal conversation*” (p.4) has been an invaluable tool in my work as a researcher and drama teacher and a focal point in the drama activities I employed, as it forms the basis on which people can develop and implement ideas.

2.4.5. Summary

In this part of the thesis I have attempted to discuss different approaches towards critical thinking that are suggested in contemporary literature by placing emphasis on key aspects of what we might term “technical-rational” approaches. I

discussed how these approaches are instrumental in helping develop critical thinking, and I also reflected on alternative pedagogic approaches which consider critical thinking as “a way of being in the world”; these approaches consider affective learning and the principles of citizenship as vital. Moving away from the dichotomy, in my thesis I will demonstrate how drama contributed to the enhancement of critical thinking tendencies within most of these approaches – in the context of critical pedagogy – beyond this focus on skills, dispositions and critical stances.

2.5. Towards a pedagogy of Critical Thinking

2.5.1. Breaking the Educational Silences and Reconsidering Pedagogy

Discourse on pedagogy reveals the challenge in establishing clearly a definitive understanding of what pedagogy actually means, since policy-makers, educators or even researchers interpret and approach it in various ways according to the context applied. As Murphy (1996) states, “[i]n different cultures at different points of time in history, the meaning and status of pedagogy have shifted” (p.9). The diverse conceptualisations of pedagogy range from a focus on the role of teachers and learners to their engagement in the classroom (Murphy, 1996); “on teaching with its attendant discourse” (Alexander, 2003, p.3); on teachers, teaching processes and contexts (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999) and on teaching as an improvisatory art (Eisner, 1979). However, as Nikolakaki (2012) observes, it seems that the majority of these approaches see pedagogy as primarily being associated with teaching while they neglect its origins. This plethora of distinct definitions necessitates revisiting the term “pedagogue” by resorting to the ways ancient Greece defined it.

Within ancient Greek society, pedagogues (*paidagōgus*) used to be seen as “tenders” of children (*pais* plus *agōgos*, a “child-tender”) and, according to Plato, they were “men who by age and experience [were] qualified to serve as both leaders (*hēgemonas*) and custodians (*paidagōgous*)” of children (Longenecker, 1983, p.53). In contrast to teachers (*didaskalos*), pedagogues did not teach their students – boys – letters as the first did; rather, apart from their role

as companions, they gave advice on what it means to be a man; or, in other words, how to behave as a future citizen, a vital matter for ancient Greeks (*ibid*).

Pedagogues, more so than teachers, had a close relationship with their students' families; although they were slaves, they were considered as members of the families they were associated with (Castle, 1961, p.63-64). This type of relationship and interaction may seem to us as an oxymoron, since, based on Freire's (1970) "*Pedagogy of the oppressed*", this was the education of the privileged by the oppressed; however, for Greeks a pedagogue was a person who could inspire respect and wisdom (Castle, 1961, p.63-64). Plato gave us an example of this type of relationship when referring to a discussion between Socrates and a young boy student, called Lysis: "*Socrates asked: Someone controls you?*" Lysis replied, "*Yes, he is my tutor [or pedagogue] here*". "*Is he a slave?*" Socrates queried: "*Why, certainly; he belongs to us*", responded Lysis, to which Socrates mused, "*What a strange thing, I exclaimed; a free person controlled by a slave!*" (Plato, Lysis 208, cited in Smith, 2006, p.202).

The distinction between pedagogues and teachers, guidance and tutoring, and education for school or life was a crucial issue among discussions about education for many centuries. In his *On Pedagogy*, Immanuel Kant (1900) talks about the distinction between pedagogues and teachers based on the fact that teachers are not truly pedagogues but merely technocrats who act in certain ways on demand. In his words,

"Education includes the nurture of the child and, as it grows, its culture.

The latter is firstly negative, consisting of discipline; that is, merely the

correcting of faults. Secondly, culture is positive, consisting of instruction and guidance (and thus forming part of education). Guidance means directing the pupil in putting into practice what he has been taught. Hence the difference between a private teacher who merely instructs, and a tutor or governor who guides and directs his pupil [is that] [t]he one trains for school only, the other for life” (Kant, 1900, p.23-24).

Considering the meaningful role of pedagogue and the need to critically re-imagine teaching and learning, the concept assumed in this thesis resonates with that of critical pedagogy. In essence, it considers the perspectives of the important critical educators and philosophers who offered insights into the theoretical and practical contexts of this approach such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and Cornelius Castoriadis. Their ideas combine and complement each other to reflect that critical pedagogy could contribute to the development of critical democratic citizens. These are autonomous, responsible individuals, with a sense of open-mindedness and freedom that negates dehumanising practices or experiences without active or concerted effort through the nurturing of a democratic ethos – essential aspects of the concept of critical thinking used for the purposes of this study.

2.5.2. Rethinking Education beyond the Neoliberal Concept of Society; the Place of Critical Pedagogy

In his article “*The rising tide of insignificance*”, Castoriadis (2003) states that in the recent era of neoliberal society, the meaning and value of education has been redefined while its aim has been changed from that of a public good to an individualistic commodity being given over to marketisation. As such, school is not the place where a child is supposed to be educated to become a human being – “*anthropos*” (*ibid*, p.34); rather, it is framed as the place where educators act as depositors within the aim to fill children, the passive vessels, with specific knowledge, or as Freire (1970) puts it, “[*a*] *content which is detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance*” (p.71).

This type of education, Freire (1970) believes, is best described within the “*banking concept*” (p.56) in which teachers, as depositors are active while students are passive members of the classroom community. According to him, “*implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is a spectator, not re-creator*” (*ibid*). The devastating consequences of that system are found in the production and reproduction of passive people who neglect their nature since “[*they*] *are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For, if disassociated from inquiry, from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human*” (*ibid*, p.53).

Castoriadis (1988) criticises the function of contemporary education claiming that the problem with the schools is that while aiming to equip students with all the necessary skills and knowledge, the way of approaching the processes of teaching and learning does not match what education is supposed to stand for. In his words,

The child [...] is forced to be passive against someone who stuffs him/her with knowledge. S/he suffers a complete separation of his/her physical and mental development [...] The result is that when s/he leaves school s/he is a disabled person, who shouldn't — if the educational system had had its way — have either body or mind. If s/he has still a body or mind it is because of his/her resistance to the system (Castoriadis, 1988 cited in Nikolakaki, 2012, p.35).

In a similar vein, Giroux (1985) claims that the dominance of the technocratic character of neoliberal education proletarianises teachers' work to factory workers in the nineteenth century, when they used to be considered as having a “*status of low-level employees or civil servants whose main function seems to be to implement reforms decided by experts in the upper levels of state and educational bureaucracies*” (*ibid*, p.20). As a consequence, issues regarding what counts as knowledge, what is worth teaching or learning and how one decides upon the aim and the approach of the process of teaching seem to be eliminated in the pursuit of routinisation and standardisation through what Giroux (2000) calls “*management pedagogies*” (p.20). This parallel with technocrats

finds Freire (1996) calling teachers to realise the anxieties that the system creates for them and their students. In his words,

“Educators who are mesmerized by the neoliberal pragmatic discourse are not educating in the full sense of the word. When these educators accept the notion that what is important is the acquisition of facts without the educational background to critically analyse these facts, they produce a type of training that reduces students to narrow technical professionals” (p.96-100).

Arguing against the banking concept of education, Freire (2000) states that education should break the oppression and the secret silences among students and teachers by *“reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students”* (p.72). It is crucial for him that the *“educational goal of deposit-making [is replaced] with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world”* (*ibid*, p.79), or, in other words, that both teachers and students should act as equal members of the educational community, seek for emancipatory participation that overcomes authorisation and manage to adopt a real perception of their reality.

Critical pedagogy has been suggested as a solution to inegalitarian and oppressive conditions insofar as it criticises the structures, the social relations of power and the dominant culture found in the contemporary educational system while it provides the basis for resistance, hope, respect and democracy (*ibid*). As Freire (1970) claims, critical pedagogy does not see education as a neutral process; rather, it sees it as part of the social, human, cultural, ideological, political and

historical contexts and as such, both teachers and students should acquire critical consciousness and become social agents of their society.

Giroux (1994) states that critical pedagogy is about how to be “*in the world with the world*” (p.133) and seems to be an essential element of awareness, resistance, and social struggle since it indicates how questions of power, voice, audience and evaluation actively work to create certain relations between learners and teachers, institutions and communities. As he explains, pedagogy in the critical sense elucidates the relationship between knowledge, power and authority and as such, it is very important to question and examine the social, political and cultural influences found at schools in terms of approaches, practices, resources and language. He argues that we will be able to empower both teachers and learners to resist to the given marginalised context and take control of their own growth and transformation if we first “[*identify how*] *human experiences are produced, contested, and legitimated within the dynamics of everyday classroom life*” (*ibid*).

2.5.3. Critical Pedagogy as Emancipatory Practice

Critical pedagogy scholars have argued that education encompasses more than teaching and learning; this is a pedagogy that entails a sense of liberation. Giroux and Simon (1989) see pedagogy as a deliberate attempt to have an effect on what kind of knowledge and identities are created and how this can be done within particular sets of social and political contexts and relations. According to

them, pedagogy signposts what kind of knowledge is worth teaching and learning, what it means to hold certain knowledge, in what ways we should desire knowledge, and in what ways we could form representations of ourselves, the others, as well as our political, social and physical environment (*ibid*).

Giroux (1988) – the educator who, more than any other, championed the cause of teachers as intellectuals and political agents capable of transforming the educational system – suggests that pedagogy should not be about the “**how**” of teaching; rather, it should be about the “**why**”. That is because it constitutes the basis of teaching and learning as well as helping to break secret silences and answering dilemmas and questions of education. Giroux (1985) and Nikolakaki (2012) claim that teachers should consider the ways within which the “why” questions influence the “how” ones in order to become political actors in their educational settings, understand their roles and interpret the way they experience and approach their work. As Giroux (1985) explains, once it has become possible to acknowledge the teachers’ effort required for cultivating in children skills and attitudes and enabling them to become active citizens in democracy instead of passive citizens or even civil servants, then “*the concept of intellectual (becomes) the basis for interrogating the specific ideological and economic conditions under which intellectuals as a group need to work in order to function as critical, creative human beings*” (p.28).

Giroux and McLaren (1986) argue that what critical pedagogy offers is to put teaching and learning within the more political goal of education and thus provide teachers and students with opportunities to take risks, deal with on-going

relations of power and strive to change the oppressive settings they (may) find themselves in. In other words, critical pedagogy acknowledges that schools are socially constructed realities in which participants are encouraged to be critical, engage in critique, analyse, enquire and consider transformative possibilities and alternatives related to the social context of classrooms and schooling itself. By the same token, Berlak (1985) states that the purpose of critical pedagogy is that of “*liberation*” (p.2) (or emancipation), in the sense that people:

“[...] are increasingly free to choose from a range of alternative perspectives on themselves and their social worlds. This freedom of choice requires the ability to see one’s own views of what is good or right, possible or impossible, true or false, as problematic, socially constructed, and subject to social and political influence” (ibid).

For Freire (2000), critical pedagogy is an act of freedom, since it motivates participants to get over their passivity fears and doubts or even their authoritarianism and their alienating intellectualism and become active and critical in thinking about and acting together upon their world. In order to do so, both of them should be considered as and act as subjects of education for, “*the solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become ‘beings for themselves’*” (ibid, p.74).

Educating students for emancipation puts emphasis on social power relations in terms of how individuals are included or excluded according to their status, class, gender and race. Giroux (2004) states that any deviations regarding

those forms of power in education should be taken seriously and considered, for, as he explains, “*the issue is not whether public or higher education has become contaminated with politics; it is more importantly about recognizing that education is already a space of politics, power, and authority*” (p.140).

In contrast to the banking education and its aim to fill up students’ heads with predetermined information, Freire (1998c) suggests that pedagogy is an act of cognition that should be conveyed by both students and teachers in a dialogical context. In this way, any contradiction is dissolved while “*the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist*” (Freire, p.1970, p.33), to provide space for the “*teacher-student with students-teachers*” (*ibid*). Thus, contrary to banking education, a dialogue takes place among students and teachers, getting them to contribute together their different knowledge and interpretations, question the given information, make inquiries, as well as detect, address and solve problems.

The role of teachers is also different in the sense that they are not sources of information and knowledge anymore, but the world itself, in its relation with humans. This engagement in dialogue challenges students to express themselves freely, think critically and construct their own languages, naming and understanding of their reality (*ibid*). It is worth noting, however, that Freire has arguably modified his view throughout the years, and that in his later writings he seems to be acknowledging the fact that teachers are not in exactly the same position as the students, as the knowledge teachers can contribute to the conversation are of more advanced areas of expertise (Mejía, 2004, p.13).

Among the aims of critical pedagogy is to engage students in critical consciousness or, as Freire (1998b) terms it, in “*conscientisation*” (p.97), namely to be able to recognise and evaluate forms of power within the broader educational system; that is, the approaches, methods and discourses used, and the intended knowledge. Freire (1998b) demands that teachers “*challenge the learner’s naïve curiosity in order that they can both share criticalness*” (p.97) because, according to him, “*that is how an educational practice can affirm itself as the unveiling of hidden truth*” (*ibid*). Therefore, it is through consciousness and praxis together that students can enhance their critical thinking and active participation while attempting to recognise and then change any problematic settings they may have in their lives (*ibid*).

However, in order for this goal to be achieved, teachers should develop ways to enact the same themselves, in praxis, i.e., in how they teach, approach or promote an issue to or with their students. As Giroux (1992) maintains,

“If students are going to learn how to take risks, to develop a healthy skepticism towards all master narratives, to recognize the power relations that offer them the opportunity to speak in particular ways, and be willing to critically confront their role as critical citizens who can animate a democratic culture, they need to see such behaviour demonstrated in the social practices and subject positions that teachers live out and not merely propose” (p.141).

2.5.4. Critical Pedagogy and Democracy

Giroux (2007) states that democracy should be the cornerstone of pedagogy in terms of teaching about democracy as well as preparing students to become critical and active citizens who respect and adopt the democratic values in praxis. In his words,

“rather than shrink from our political responsibility as educators, we should embrace one of pedagogy’s most fundamental goals: To teach students to believe that democracy is desirable and possible” (ibid, p.3).

In the same line of argument he argues that a democratic pedagogy is essential, as *“it provides the very foundation for students to learn not merely how to be governed, but also how to be capable of governing” (ibid).* This points not only to understanding the democratic ethos and conventions that shape their society but also to being able to consider when to make decisions for the common good.

What is needed for the purposes of the above, according to Castoriadis (2003), is a critical pedagogy in the classroom nurturing all the values and ethos that underpin democracy. What is more, it is essential to create the settings for an active citizen through conscientisation, to think critically and take action inspired by human dignity, freedom, personal autonomy and momentous collective participation in political and social events. As he extends further,

“[W]ithout such an ethos, there can no longer be a “Republic of Letters,” but only pseudotruths administered by the State, by the clergy (whether monotheistic or not), or by the media” (ibid, p.6).

Giroux (2004, p.53) maintains that *“[d]emocracy necessitates forms of education that provide a new ethic of freedom and a reassertion of collective identity as central preoccupations of a vibrant democratic culture and society”* (p.53). These preoccupations should be engaged with passion in order to maintain a good living for the citizens of a democratic schooling and society (ibid). However, Castoriadis (2003) warns, freedom demands reason and critical thinking, since excessive use of freedom may lead to egoism and hedonism, and as such, it may cultivate citizens who care for their individual freedom only. As Freire (2004) comments, *“It is necessary for [people] to learn that [their] own autonomy can only attain legitimacy if they respect the autonomy of others”* (p.38).

The values of freedom and autonomy seem to be of importance for a communal agency of democratic ethos, social equality (in terms of class, gender, race, age, disability, etc.) and importantly, responsibility as a procedure of understanding our world, the consequences of our acts on it and the need for unity and mutual respect. In this respect, critical pedagogy opens up possibilities for gaining global and independent insights into social and political contradictions, while the implementation of conscientisation as *nous* and critical thinking leads to praxis and resistance (Castoriadis, 2003).

2.5.5. Critical Pedagogy as a Form of Critical Theory

Critical pedagogy is based on the premise that people's daily experiences are a result of power, control and privilege. As Kincheloe (2004) comments, these experiences help to *“undermine for social justice, freedom and egalitarian social relations in educational, economical, political, social and cultural domains”* (Kincheloe, 2004, p.78 - commenting on the work of Giroux). This is associated with critical theory, a concept that arose as a discourse concerning historical and social events. In a broader interpretation, Kincheloe and McLaren (2008) explain that critical theory,

“[looks at] issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system” (p.288).

Even though there is no intention to elaborate on critical theory in this thesis, it is important to briefly refer to the way critical pedagogy is being informed by critical theory. In an attempt to develop and make sense of human experience, critical theory discovers and interprets social differences, i.e. gender, culture, race and class in order to approach more than one way of acquiring knowledge, traditions and discourses. To this end, the encounter of critical theory with education yields critical pedagogy in encouraging students, or even teachers, to understand the world they live in and realise how uses or indications of power influence their own attitudes and actions through raising dominance or dialogue, exclusion or inclusion, oppression or cooperation (*ibid*). As Kincheloe (2004)

notes:

“[...] diverse theoretical traditions have informed [...] critical pedagogy and have demanded understanding of diverse forms of oppression including class, race, gender, sexual, cultural, religious, colonial, and ability-related concerns. In this context, critical theorists become detectives of new theoretical insights, perpetually searching for new and interconnected ways of understanding power and oppression and the ways they shape everyday life and human experience” (p.49).

2.5.6. Summary

My considerations on critical pedagogy presented in this subchapter are important, as they help indicate some central pathways that much of the theory on critical thinking has neglected and that I consider significant for the connection between drama, critical thinking and citizenship education, which was discussed in subchapter 2.4.3. Critical pedagogy was explored as a medium of cultivating critical thinking as a way of being in the world due to its aim to prepare students and teachers to become both critical thinkers and critical citizens who think and act beyond their self-interests and status, for their personal emancipation and the common good.

Giroux (1988) states that *“schools need to be defended, as an important public service that educates students to be critical citizens who can think,*

challenge, takes risks, and believe that their actions will make a difference in the larger society” (Giroux, 1988 cited in Shor, 1992, p.16). Therefore, in negotiating the public sphere with an affair for private lives, the critical classroom becomes grounded in issues related to human rights, citizenship, democratic ethos, resistance and social justice. It is this critical pedagogy – based on a democratic ethos that evolves into conscientisation – which emphasises the importance of cultivating critical thinking in young students through drama, as discussed in the next sections and explored throughout this thesis.

2.6. Exploring the Role of Drama and Theatre in the Cultivation of Critical Thinking

I will now turn to the key question of my thesis, which relates to the role of drama in the enhancement of critical thinking in children. In this section I will first provide a review of the literature and highlight the relationship between theatre and critical thinking in society. The most influential 20th century theatre practitioners in the areas of critical thinking and active participation, namely Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal, are particularly important in this discussion. As Brecht and Boal's work is broad and complex, I will focus only on these aspects of their work that have a direct relevance to my thesis. Secondly, I will discuss how these practitioners influenced drama and the way their theories may be used for the purposes of cultivating and enhancing critical thinking in children. I will conclude by indicating some important limitations as far as their contribution is concerned.

2.6.1. Brechtian Epic Theatre and the Transformation of Society

Bertolt Brecht is considered to be one of the most radical theorists and theatre practitioners of the 20th century. In response to Aristotle's theatrical tradition, which he called "Aristotelian drama", Brecht created a revolutionary form of theatre, combining the melodrama of the 19th century, and the naturalistic style promoted by Stanislavsky (Brecht, 1964). According to Brecht (1964), these traditions were inherent in a theatrical approach that invokes before the audience

an illusion of reality and invites them to “*identify [themselves] with the hero to the point of complete self-oblivion*” (p.22); thus, his approach disregards the potential of theatre for becoming a laboratory of social change. Drawing heavily on Marxism, Brecht’s theory and approach were labelled as overtly political since he used theatre as a tool of demythologising the taken-for-granted, as well as promoting social change based on ideological arguments and an understanding of social and political contradictions. For him, “*apolitical*” (*ibid*) arts were closely linked to the ruling classes and aimed at depriving people of opportunities to think critically about themselves and their lives (*ibid*).

In his plays, Brecht sought to promote social, transformative political and ideological action, addressing moral and political questions to motivate participants, actors and audience, to think critically and seek change rather than be swept away by emotions (Benjamin, 2003; Ewen, 1970; Franks, 1999). Brecht introduced *Verfremdungseffekte* (Neelands & Dobson, 2000, p.69), a theatrical element that had a “*strange-making effect*” (*ibid*) and was used to suggest that reality was changeable. By historicising certain social events and creating a distance from those events or the related characters presented on stage, he tried to motivate the audience to go beyond the taken-for-granted or the deceptive understanding of the reality portrayed to them; he also aimed at making the audience “*look at ordinary things in a striking, peculiar or unexpected way*” (*ibid*), adopt different perspectives and “[re]consider each new situation afresh” (Brecht, 1966, p.49).

Brecht used Verfremdungseffekte against the dissociation or alienation of individuals from the capitalistic societies they were living in, in order to awaken them from their passivity; in such contexts, he claimed, people put their lives in the service of commodity and become so indoctrinated, they lose their capacity to see and hear beyond the obvious or what they are told to believe. Thus, Brecht's method was vital in achieving a new or an alternative understanding of familiar situations, objects and behaviours and in setting the basis for transforming the audience through the performances (Willet, 1999). When describing this process, Brecht (1989, cited in Willet, 1999, p.71) notes:

“The stage began to be instructive... Oil, inflation, war, social struggles, the family, religion, wheat, the meat market, all became subjects for theatrical representation... As the ‘background’ came to the front of the stage so people’s activity was subject to criticism ... [t]he theatre became an affair for philosophers, but only for such philosophers as wished (sic) not just to explain the world but also to change it” (ibid).

Brechtian theatre has been labelled as “epic” (Gale & Deeney, 2012, p.296) since the stories it entails are broken down into several self-contained and free-standing episodes. By leaving gaps between each episode, Brecht aimed to provide his audience with opportunities to exercise their own judgement, make connections between the episodes, think of different possibilities or alternatives of the situation presented and come up with their own conclusions (Willet, 1999). In Brecht's (1964) words, “[t]he epic play is a construction that must be viewed rationally and in which things must be recognized; therefore, the way it is

presented must go half-way to meet such viewing” (p.43). The use of Verfremdungseffekte contributed to the achievement of that goal, as the narrative content was presented in a non-linear, non-illusionist, but rather, a dialectical way (*ibid*).

2.6.1.1. Brechtian Gestus, Critical Thinking and the Role of Emotional Engagement

In the framework of his opposition to the more illusionary artistic forms, as these were reflected in what he termed Aristotelian theatre, Brecht was often misconstrued as opposing reason in favour of emotion, thus he was thought to be following a misplaced form of Cartesian dualism. On the contrary, even though Brecht rejected the cathartic element of Aristotelian drama, his approach was never against the educational power of emotions (Benjamin, 2003; Ewen, 1970). As Franks (1999) explains, for Brecht, both thinking and feeling were part of the process of learning; audiences were encouraged to think critically through feelings such as anger and irritation at injustice, which were used to provoke responses. Far from dismissing emotion and psychological enquiry, Brecht regarded well-informed emotions as vital components that cultivate active citizens (*ibid*).

In this vein, the differentiation between Stanislavskian and Brechtian methods is developed gradually through three stages of rehearsals; in the first stage actors should become familiar with their roles, in the second stage they empathise

with their characters and then, in the third stage, they “*try to see the character from the outside, from the standpoint of society*” (Brecht, 1964, p.159). As Brecht (1964) explained, it is in the transition from the second to the third stage that the critical stance takes place while fitting the third-person exercises in the narration performed. An example of how Brecht helped his actors to arrive at the third stage is presented in his own journal, while referring to his attempt to approach the Berliner Ensemble’s Mother Courage:

“I put in 10 minutes epic rehearsal for the first time in the eleventh scene. Gerda Müller and Dunskus as peasants are deciding that they cannot do anything against the Catholics. I ask them to add ‘said the man’, ‘said the woman’ after each speech. Suddenly the scene became clear and Müller found a realistic attitude” (Brecht, 1993, p.405).

As John Willet (1999) explains in his book “*Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic*”, the technique presented above was not used so as to avoid or to block emotional engagement, but to show that the actors’ emotions should not correspond to those of the characters they perform. The actor presents and, at the same time, examines the behaviour of the character in a way that permits and encourages the audience’s questioning and cross-examination. Brecht’s epic approach was not just pointed at the audience but rather the combination of audience and actors for the purposes of interrogating a given situation or character. Instead of being inside the skin of the character, Brecht required that his actors keep a critical distance from their roles in order to be fully conscious of their actions and to better understand the situation their characters

were in (*ibid*). In order to meet Brecht's expectations his actors were challenged to master their roles by considering critically their various gestures and expressions, as well as those of their colleagues and their related characters (*ibid*). In this way, Brecht tried to launch the idea of "*the intelligent actor*" (Brook, 1972, p.85) who can consider and realise the value of his contribution both in his art and in the society. In Brook's (1972) words,

"[t]here were and still are many actors who pride themselves on knowing nothing about politics and who treat the theatre as an ivory tower. For Brecht such an actor is not worthy of his place in adult company" (p.85–86).

Brecht aimed to produce and present a narrative full of clarity in order to enable the audience to perceive not only the characters and their way of behaving, but also, the derivation of those behaviours and its connection to reality. In order to do so, Brecht would ask his actors not to focus on the characters' inner life but, rather, on their Gestus, namely, the whole picture of the actors' bodies (not just the gestures or posture). For Brecht, Gestus signifies the social heart of an episode since it has a clear class/status within a social context (Willet, 1999). In her attempt to study the actor's perceptions of Gestus, Hodge (2010) saw Gestus as "*the aesthetic gestural presentation of the economic and socio-ideological construction of human identity and interaction*", which "*finds ultimate expression in the corporeal and intellectual work of the performer*" (p.17). Gestus was the key semiotic concept in a truly Brechtian training and performance. In this project, as it will be explained further in the analysis chapter, the form of Gestus

described here is approached within the notion of embodied thinking (*ibid*).

Brechtian ideas and approaches have generally informed my project in terms not only of embodied learning but, more importantly, in regards to the exploration of various imaginative contexts and stories which raise current social issues such as diversity, bullying, abuse, citizenship and self-awareness. These issues I attempted to approach in drama beyond location, time, or other features of the participants, such as their social position. In accordance with the philosophy of critical pedagogy based on which students are not determined by their situations, but need to identify their worlds (Counsell, 2004, p.88), Brechtian ideas were used to inform the structure of my drama workshops in the sense that various activities and conventions were designed to allow the children to take action, intervene when necessary, as well as reflect upon the characters' actions and relate them to their real lives. A further explanation of how Brechtian ideas have influenced current drama educators such as Dorothy Heathcote is presented in the next subchapter: "Process Drama and Critical thinking" while a further reference and analysis of how my fieldwork adopted such ideas follows in the "Analysis of Data" chapter.

2.6.2. Boalian Theatre and the Empowered Society

Theatre practitioner Augusto Boal was greatly inspired by his compatriot theorist Paulo Freire's work on the challenge of imposed ideology and struggle for

the liberation of oppressed and labouring people. Much like Brecht, Boal considered theatre as political; in fact, he introduced a new type of political theatre which he called Theatre of the Oppressed, leaving space for the audience to engage actively in the performances. According to him, this was a significant contribution: if society wants people to develop a comprehensive personality, it should not just allow them to guess how they would solve problems under certain circumstances and as certain characters, but also, to be active and experience this using their bodies, minds and thoughts (Boal, 1985;1995;1998;2000;2006;2013).

The target of the Theatre of the Oppressed was twofold: first, to put forward tools for liberation by using theatre devices so as to examine social issues such as injustice, power relations and oppression, and second, to encourage participants to familiarise themselves with any context related to problem-solving processes and to practise strategies required to revolutionise their world (Boal, 1985, p.ix-x). In this vein, Boal (1985) suggested that people need to experience dialogue in the role of both actors and the audience; in other words, to become spect-actors who transform themselves into protagonists of the dramatic action, within given problematic situations, examining and rehearsing alternatives and demonstrating their own ideas and desires through their voices and movements (Boal, 1995, p.40; Cohen-Cruz& Schutzman, 2006, p.113). Because of their demonstration of how certain problematic situations portrayed by the actors could be solved, the audience are encouraged to imagine alternatives, practise change, reflect on action and problematise the conditions of their lives (*ibid*).

Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed promotes the participants' (actors and

spect-actors) engagement in the process of analysis of contradiction, that is, “*a Marxist dialectical process in which transformation occurs through struggle and conflict*” (Boal, 1998, p.20). In this sense, this process encourages critical consciousness, reflection and critical thinking which in general are developed throughout several different stages of abilities and achievements: first, to define, name, and identify oneself; second, to perceive and make sense of different kinds of contradictions related to one’s own behaviour or social reality; and finally, to analyse these contradictions driving to transformation or change in social reality and in political action (*ibid*).

In order for this dialectical line of approach to be active and transformative, there should be particular divisions, such as these between the subject and object in aesthetic space, the self and other, the enactment and reflection, the actor and the character, the twofold roles of the spectators/actors as spect-actors, and the classifications of the oppressors and the oppressed (Boal, 1985; 1998). As Boal (1995) explains, these divisions may be changeable and subject to modification; “*[the stage – audience relationship] is founded on the subject-object relationship. But no one can be reduced to the condition of absolute object*” (*ibid*, p.42). This flexibility is conditioned by a range of experiences, which are made more realistic and truthful through the aforementioned divisions between the spectators and the performance (*ibid*).

For Boal, the crux of the matter is the spect-actors’ actions after the performance and, specifically, “*what a group of people with a common social problem or conflict can effectuate in their real lives through the interaction and*

experiences of trying out different solution[s] within the form of theatre” (Edkvist, 2005, p.143). Boal (1998) argues that all kind of societies are in need of both personal and political change, thus, people should enhance their problem-solving skills and overcome their passivity. That Boalian techniques can offer this possibility is strengthened by Edkvist’s (2005) research findings. This study involved a number of problematic school classes which used these techniques, especially that of *Forum Theatre*; the study findings indicated that their relationships improved as a result of this and many students who were considered oppressed were given the opportunity to be more active. In particular, they became more interactive and modified their way of speaking and body language; as Edkvist (2005) concluded, these changes signified a modification of their habitus, at least within the school context.

Similarly to the Brechtian view about the relationship between ideology, thinking and the material body, Boal’s (1995) ideas focus on embodied experiences being essential parts of transformative achievements due to their potential to actuate the body, and admit the mind-in-the-body within certain situations. For him, the human being, first and foremost, is a body that registers senses and by extension, sensations that arouse emotions and lead the body to react accordingly: *“sensations transform themselves into emotions and these then give rise to specific thoughts”* (*ibid*, p.30) and vice versa (*ibid*). Similarly to Bourdieu, Boal (2000) considers the body as a critical agent used in theatre as an inextricable element of meaning-making of society, culture and identity politics. Through various drama scenes presented before the audience, the actors use both their

minds and bodies to mirror the given social and cultural contexts and to reflect to the audience the potential of action to take place in order to bring about change (*ibid*).

The process of creating and sharing authentic group thinking or problem solving through theatrical techniques that Boal (2000) suggests exemplifies Freire's (1970) concept of "*authentic thinking*" (p.63-64), in which participants become interdependent, developing their thinking together in their common effort to take action and transform the concept of the reality they are presented with (p.58). This concept informed my pedagogy as designed and applied in the workshops of this project with the intention of providing children with opportunities to interact actively within a community of inquiry and problem solving. I hoped that this would encourage them to take a critical stance towards the scenarios they were presented with, posing questions, imagining possibilities and alternatives, making decisions and being open-minded, reflective-minded and fair-minded. My aim was to examine whether these elements, set at the research agenda of this project, were indeed developed by the end of the workshops.

2.7. Process Drama and Critical Thinking

Brecht's and Boal's approaches have some implications in educational drama and, importantly, the "process drama" (O'Neill, 1995), which is grounded in the pioneering work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. As its name implies, it is concerned with the process of encouraging children to engage in a fictional context and create drama together (i.e. dealing with a given problem) as if they were characters who are "*here, now, and under pressure to act in situations*" (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984, p.129). In the following paragraphs I will discuss the way process drama can be the means by which children can develop critical thinking, influenced by elements of critical pedagogy (as explained in subchapter 2.5.), and can acquire the competence to examine/re-examine their current situation, question the seemingly unquestionable issues, challenge authority and seek change.

2.7.1. Imaginative Contexts and Role-Playing

Several drama educators state that drama offers the potential for motivating children to cultivate their imagination and general thinking and thus, modify their identity in different ways. As O'Neill (1995, p.91) stresses, the narrative mode along with logical reasoning can serve as an intuitive medium that combines the imaginary and real concepts within which children are invited to participate actively, explore their own viewpoint and those of others, experiment

with the impact of their decisions in a safe context and discover who they are and who they may become. Fisher (2008) comments accordingly:

“Drama as performance or role play provides opportunities not only for children to read texts, but also to enter the narrative as participants... Drama brings the possibility of thinking with the whole person, with body as well as voice. Through improvisation and role play children can explore their own and other’s ideas. They can follow through their thoughts and feelings, and consider their consequences” (p.164).

In Clark’s (1997) view, this might be interpreted as a mode of intuitive knowledge, that is, an *“understanding in an approximate way”* (p.17), which *“proceeds hand-in-hand with analysis, and is an invitation to go further”* (ibid). In this process, children are to be active participants in the construction of meaning and knowledge whereas their experiences (within the social context they live in), preferences (the issues they consider important to their lives) and uniqueness are taken into account and used to improve the variety of alternatives and the quality of learning that may occur (Neelands, 1984, p.2). Neelands (1984) states:

“Children [...] use their existing experience as a means of making sense of new experience/information, and [...] if we give them the opportunity to build these bridges between what they already know and the new learning presented by school, we are enabling them to refine their own ways of learning; we help them to learn how to learn” (p.2).

O'Neill (1995, p.4) suggests that drama provides authentic contexts in which children can be engaged to make connections with their reality, question or challenge their own and others' preconceived viewpoints and any other taken-for-granted perceptions of society. Winston (2004, p.55) argues that role-play can help introduce children to the world, and can help them understand themselves, society and others on the basis of self-awareness (the necessity to know more about themselves, think about what they are, what they believe in and aim for). Role-play can also afford them empathy – thinking what other people may think or feel and what they may have in common with the characters they play, so that they can incorporate these elements regardless of the extent to which these characters differ from their own identities (*ibid*).

Greene (1995) argues that imaginative contexts provide opportunities for children to observe the world through a different lens in their attempt to perceive and understand it. Ricoeur and Valdés (1991) explain that imagination is pivotal in the development of children's thinking and their familiarisation with alternative and expanded visions and interpretations of the real world. This is because imagination has the capacity to go beyond reality and step into a made-up universe, which – unlike the real world – does provide an outlet for human feelings and experience. These fictitious worlds shape reality in terms not of reproducing it, but of inventing it, discovering it and exploring it (*ibid*, p.12).

Errington (1996) states that the process forms of drama enable children to explore, identify, or even clarify the contexts that may prevent them from finding

their own voice and their identity through the “*interrogat[ion] [of] their own and others' taken-for-granted beliefs, attitudes, emotions and actions*” (p.29). Their participation is enhanced by the possibility of distance and empathetic responsiveness, within the children’s simultaneous observation and participation in the narrative before them, and “*takes the form of an ongoing criticism of causes and effects of selected human predicaments*” (Errington, 1996, p.44). Neelands (1984) supports the potential of such distancing possibilities, framing Brechtian distancing strategies in process drama on the basis of the idea of metaxis, namely the mental coexistence of two worlds at the same time, the imaginary and the real between the imaginary and the real (p.10).

It is to this process that O'Neill (1995, p.37) refers when arguing that role-play allows for depth and insight by the participants during the preparation, enactment and reflective processes during or after the drama episodes when children are called upon to identify and solve problems, think of alternatives, imagine possibilities through other people’s eyes, or attempt to understand some of the complexities of other people, times, and places. As she suggests, children create new understandings by experiencing various points of view through the others’ eyes while at the same time they make reflections on the narrative beforehand and consider the gist of what is said or implied. In the same line of reasoning Verriour (1984) comments:

“Drama offers no neat, quick solutions: indeed the further a particular problem is investigated the more complex it could become. Students who

are only equipped to deal with problems at a subjective level of thinking will have difficulty in conceptualizing a problem at a more universal, objective level. In making provision for reflection in the dramatic experience, the teacher is continually planning situations which move students from their subjective concerns to an objective awareness of the world in which they live and from a concrete, contextual use of conventional language to the use and awareness of the power of symbolic thought and language” (p.130).

2.7.2. Playfulness, Pleasure and Embodiment

Numerous authors agree that playfulness is the cornerstone of intense participation, fun, entertainment and aesthetic pleasure within drama, for its playful character functions as an invitation and a stimulus for children to participate voluntarily (Dickinson *et al.* 2006, p.12; Wagner, 1999, p.2; Winston, 2010, p.79). According to Huizinga (1949), play is in fact freedom and what attracts children is the potential to engage in it, not because they have to, but because they really enjoy it: “[t]he need for it is only urgent to the extent that the enjoyment of it makes it a need. It is never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty. It is never a task” (*ibid*, p.8). Researchers suggest that this element of drama opens up possibilities for every child to participate actively and with confidence because it “*makes learning enjoyable, exciting’ and ‘challenging’*” (Wagner, 1999, p.5) and thus, makes them feel that they are worthy and equal to others,

helps them identify their personal skills, enjoy themselves, have fun and release their energy and encourages them to contribute to their learning (Plummer, 2001, p.7).

Woolland (1993) asserts that the elements that comprise playfulness, as identified in games, encourage children to feel more comfortable, get to know their classmates better, and feel free to express themselves and develop positive attitudes towards their learning (*ibid*, p.43). Similarly, Winston (2010) suggests that playfulness invites a form of risk that functions as a “*rigor of pleasure*” (p.79) that enhances children’s participation. Winston and Tandy (2009) claim that games are guided by internal rules related to real rules of behaviour in everyday situations and this is considered important for enhancing children’s self-control as well as behavioural and thinking skills which are necessary when coping with real-life issues (*ibid*, p.12).

2.7.3. The Ensemble Spirit as a Form of Citizenship

McGrath (2002) claims that “[t]he democratic ensemble approach to drama provides young people with a model of democratic living” (p.133). In fact, drama is thought to be a way of rehearsing a communal and respectful demeanour in the class community and by extension, in society itself because it supplies its members with rules, rights and responsibilities which define how to live, identify their abilities, communicate and cooperate effectively with others (*ibid*). As O'Neill and Lambert (1982) assert, the social elements of drama contradict the

traditional pedagogy that encourages individualism, competition, racism and possessiveness of children's achievements; rather, the social elements of drama promote cooperation and elaboration based on a common stock of experiences in a way that enhances both their feelings (in terms of confidence, sense of belonging and pleasure of co-contribution) and minds (in terms of thinking in various ways freely) (*ibid*, p.13).

Neelands (2009), a pioneer of this approach, states that by working as an ensemble, young people enjoy a positive “can do” climate across their learning process which is based on the respect for each other's ideas, space and speech. Through the ensemble, they are encouraged to “*look for new ways of living together rather than against each other; to find solidarity in their common disadvantage; to create new models of pluralist community*” (*ibid*, p.176). In this way, they “*learn to work in a democratic climate with respect for minority groups [...] have social interests [...] think before speaking and acting*”, and by extension, they are “*sensitive to other people's needs and desires*”, independently of their personal characteristics such as social status, origin, gender or learning abilities (Ladson-Billings & Gillborn, 2004, p.231).

Various parallels can be drawn between the ensemble member and the member of the real-world community. In essence, as the participants learn to exist and interact with other people, they explore real-life issues and transferable skills such as having a voice of their own, participating actively in decisions, expressing their opinion, being open-minded, interacting on the basis of a “*collective endeavor*” (Winston, 2004, p.53) and of “*sacrificing their immediate self-interest*

for the good of a shared enterprise” (ibid). In this way, ensemble members feel part of a community united by “*the common experience, the investment of time and energy and (...) [the] innate desire to ‘story’, that is to make sense of (...) [that] experience*” (Wright, cited in Taylor, 2000, p.31).

Neelands (2009, p.11) suggests that the collective character of the ensemble practices in theatre and drama helps children, as students of a school class, to understand that they are citizens of a miniature community; it also helps them to engage freely in democratic educational processes on the basis of several principles⁵ developed in the Athenian polis (city state), such as “isegoria”, “isopsephia”, “parrhesia”, and “autonomia”, “isonomia” and inculcates in them the aspiration to behave as part of the whole in a way that safeguards the common good rather than their personal interests. In his words,

“[...] the experience of the ensemble might provide participants with a second order identity as citizens struggling together, on a civic stage, to create continuously challenge and modify ideas of the ‘common good’”
(Neelands, 2007, p.315).

Vygotsky (1987) argues in favour of interpersonal interactions as integral to the children’s learning, the development of meanings and the determination of their thinking. Neelands (1984, p.24) explains that drama enables children to interact and cooperate in partnership not only between them, but also with their

⁵ *Isonomia; equality in respect of the law * Isegoria; the right to speak *Isopsephia; equal representation *Parrhesia; moral obligation to speak your mind *Autonomia; right to self determination (Neelands, 2009, p.11)

teachers having equal roles and contribution. For, as he explains, teachers take part not as omniscient participants, but as individuals who are interested in contributing to the process of drama, in exchanging ideas and gaining new insights, much like the children. In this vein, Bolton (1998) suggests the implementation of the *Teacher in Role* strategy, which enables teachers to alter their relationships with children, transferring power to the latter in the pursuit of a mutually satisfying objective. In particular, they can both decide the process of the drama experience in safe and productive ways and feel that their contribution is of paramount importance as it has an impact on the way “*the thoughts, feelings, expressions and creative outcomes*” develop (Arnold, 1991, p.19).

The role of the teacher in a process drama can also be compared to that of the actor in Brecht’s epic theatre. Brecht doesn’t want his actors to totally identify with the roles in the drama, but rather wants them to maintain some distance from them. Actors sometimes address the audience directly out of characters. Thanks to this detachment, actors offer the audience a critical perspective that is different from the empathetic identification with the character. In a process drama, teachers step in role and out of role very often, creating a detachment of the character and maintaining a potential space for children to pause, use their own imagination and exercise their own judgement without revealing the plot. In this way, they can reflect on the current events happening on stage hence fulfilling the duty of drama and theatre to provide a venue for young people to explore issues worth noting and to attain a critical stance toward them (O'Connor in Anderson & Dunn, p.127).

Bakhtin (1986) argues that our social interactions do not necessarily engender new understandings or insights and this can only be achieved when we engage in a dialogue in which more than one perspectives blend together to generate new insights and points of view. Neelands (1984) states that the ensemble approach of drama favours dialogue and engenders new understandings, as children are encouraged to confront their own views or the ones presented by their classmates or teachers instead of passively accepting certain ideas. This can be reinforced by the concept of “*no penalty area*” (Heathcote, 1984, p.128), as introduced by Heathcote (1984), according to which every contribution is valid and accepted: “*participants will be able to test out ideas, try them over again, and generally examine them, without necessarily having to fulfil, in actual life situations, the promises they have tried out in the depicted one*” (*ibid*, p.128).

The role of the body in the process of thinking in relation to the current approaches towards critical thinking, (as indicated in subchapter 2.3.2. and subchapter 2.6., which draws on the work of Brecht and Boal), is applied to the area of drama, where children can use their minds, bodies and voices to think, imagine, see, touch and experience various characters’ actions. Wagner (1999), for example, asserts that drama works powerfully because the participants’ bodies as well as their minds are stimulated, enabling them to rely on imaginative and creative processes, stimulate non-linear and open-ended thinking, which in turn fosters understanding, multiple interpretations and feelings intervened through the senses:

“As students participate in educational drama, they are stimulated in imagined situations to respond with their whole beings. Because their previous stasis is disturbed, their whole organisms are aroused. Their bodies as well as their minds need to give shape to their experience and to this changing vision of the world. Learning comes as students give form to experience, as they construct meaning. Nothing gets learned until the new experience is integrated into the praxis of living” (ibid, p.17).

Thus, the children’s enactment of characters encountered in the drama context or the holistic expression of themselves during the reflective dialogues that follow may contribute to rendering the decontextualised language of a narrative to the full engagement of imagination and comprehension (*ibid*). Davis *et al.* (1996) assert that this form of embodied learning provides participants with opportunities to bring new possibilities to the moral inferences of their choices of action and importantly, to the ways in which they engage in that quest as moulded by their presence, absence, verbal and nonverbal language, the actions and the general context and location in which their roles are embedded (*ibid*, p.157).

Fels (2009) supports the idea that role-playing can function as a performative inquiry, an embodied learning system within an action-site of inquiry that takes into account the developing responses of participants as they interact within and out of roles, individually and collectively, through inquiry and reflection, in response to their curiosity to explore the question: “*what happens if?*” (p.10) with the aspiration to generate possibilities of new relationships, new interactions, engagements and recognitions. As is the case in ensemble – an idea

explored in the following subchapter – it is not the interactions between participants per se that count so much as what is engendered from those interactions, how the sharing of viewpoints, queries, interpretations, and intellectual, bodily, or emotional responses and reactions meet and are merged. According to Davis *et al.* (2003):

“The neighbors in a knowledge-generating collective are not physical bodies or social groupings. In fact, direct personal interactions may not be as vital as is commonly assumed. Rather, the neighbors that must interact in a knowledge-generating collective are ideas, hunches, queries, construals, and other manners of representation. Knowledge emerges not simply amid the juxtaposition of bodies, but amid the juxtaposition of interpretive possibilities” (p.220).

2.7.4. Summary

This chapter highlighted and explored a number of alternative approaches towards critical thinking from antiquity to the present, both from a theoretical and a practical aspect. It also included considerations on critical pedagogy that much of the theory on critical thinking has neglected and that I considered as significant for the connection between drama/theatre, critical thinking and citizenship education. Finally, it discussed the general principles that guide drama pedagogy and might serve as points of reference in the area of critical thinking in the context of affective, meaningful, democratic education that centres on children’s voice and

their general participation in learning. The theories discussed here will serve as critical lenses through which I will attempt to interpret my data in the Analysis Chapter.

CHAPTER III: CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

This part focuses on presenting the context of this research by providing information about the subjects of the study, namely the schools and the particular classes, and sheds light on the reasons for choosing those classes, as well as the chronological process of the fieldwork, from the preparatory stage until the planning of the workshops. Examining the context is crucial, given that it had a direct bearing on the research design and was directly linked with the initial setbacks and constraints that led to significant modifications.

3.1. The Sample of the Study

The chosen subjects of this project were primary school students residing in Cyprus. The selection of the samples of this population⁶ can be described as both random and purposive. In *random selection*, “each element has an equal chance of selection independent of any other event in the selection process” (Babbie, 2008, p.215). Conversely, in the *purposive* or *the non-probability sampling*, researchers choose the cases based on the strengths of the subjects’ particular characteristics that respond to the research subject matter and the conclusions drawn should rely on the specific contexts, locations and discourses (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.115).

⁶ Babbie (2008) defines *population* as the group or collection of elements that constitute domains of analysis (p.214).

A *random selection* strategy was employed in terms of randomly inviting head-teachers and asking them whether they were willing to provide me with the opportunity to conduct my research on the premises of their schools, during school time. I subsequently scheduled appointments with the head-teachers that replied in order to discuss further details of my research and find out whether it was possible to come to an agreement on the design and implementation requirements of my study. It is worth noting that the random selection strategy turned into a non-probability sampling one: out of the eight primary schools I contacted, only three were shortlisted, based on the time they were willing to allot to my research and on the availability of particular classes to be used as units of analysis. Some schools were already taking part in other research projects or educational programmes, which, in combination with the demands of the curriculum, rendered them unavailable. Such limitations forced me to face the challenge of working with children from different classes and levels and to shorten the duration of the workshops (8 x 80-minute sessions), despite having permission to conduct a longer research by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus. This permission was granted prior to the fieldwork, so as to obtain approval for entry in the schools provided that the head-teachers and class teachers agreed. All the schools accepted my drama workshop proposal, but some objected to its duration. Therefore, I decided to work with the schools that were willing to provide me with the time I requested.

To cater for purposive element sampling, the main criterion for the selection of schools was the lack of opportunities to participate in learning-

through-drama methods (even as an extra-curricular activity). This enabled me to look at the children's and their teachers' perspectives towards new experiences in the context of drama and to explore the possibilities and alternatives that drama can offer for the enhancement of critical thinking. To ensure consistency and reliability in terms of the sample, the selected schools were institutions I had never visited before. The type of non-probability sampling I employed was convenience sampling (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.114), which entails "*choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained*" (*ibid*, p.114-115). As far as location is concerned, all the schools were conveniently situated in my city of residence.

The children I intended to work with were nine years old, in keeping with Heyman and Legare's (2005) findings that children between the ages of 7 and 10 become increasingly aware of the need to have motives to distort the truth and by extension, to think critically. Additionally, given that in the curriculum for Cyprus Primary Education the 4th Grade is the only class that entails a separate module related to children's literature and social education ("agogi zois"), inviting children to think and interact within alternative imaginative contexts such as those provided through drama would have the added benefit of innovative educational initiative.

3.1.1. The Primary School Classes and the Subjects of the Research

I. Primary School Class no.1 (PC1)

Primary class 1 (PC1) is a class at a primary school (PS1) that is centrally located, close to the city centre of Limassol. The majority of the children came from middle-class families and the educational level of their parents was relatively high, with a recent survey revealing that most of them either held a university degree or were secondary school graduates. While several of these families were financially stable, with the parents working in well-paid posts in the public or private sector, most of them were average-income families. According to the first class teacher (interview held on 23/01/2012), all students were Greek-Cypriot apart from one child who came from Romania four months before I started working with the class, and for whom second language acquisition posed learning difficulties. The general level of the class was defined by both the class teacher and the head-teacher to be medium to high, based on the children's scholarly achievement in tests and active participation in different activities. Lastly, one of the boys was diagnosed as hyperactive and was on medication so as to tackle issues such as short attention span and inability to participate in actions in an open space. Although he would definitely benefit from a counsellor at school, his parents objected to the idea for fear of their child being labelled as "different". This, however, rendered it difficult for teachers to cope with activities which involved moving in an open space. At the beginning of the research, this particular boy took part in the workshop, however, because of his history at the school in combination with his inability to stay tuned and his urge to run all over

the open area where the workshop was held, the parents, the head-teacher and his class teacher and I jointly decided that it would be better for his safety and that of his classmates if he did not take part in the project.

The children of PC1 were familiar with group work activities and were used to working in groups of six, according to their seating arrangement. Their teacher reported that they had advanced cooperation skills and were very willing to participate in their learning. What is more, as the first class teacher mentioned, the majority of the children were good in making arguments, solving problems, thinking of alternatives, although the degree to which this happened was not yet satisfactory, in her opinion. To her mind (interview held on 23/01/2012), the children lacked the necessary vocabulary to enhance their critical thinking, which the confusion between the Cypriot dialect and Greek language may account for. However, according to her observation, the girls of her class seemed more adept at defending their arguments or extending them further, whereas boys did so in a more superficial and direct way.

The fieldwork in PC1 took place between early January and late March 2012, and the drama workshops were held during non-core modules, as the teacher was skeptical about allotting time that was meant for literacy or mathematics classes. The first unit of analysis – out of three units in a multiple case study – namely PC1, focused on a group of 20 nine-year-old children. The workshops took place weekly, each time on a different day depending on the school schedule and the teacher who taught the secondary module I was supposed to replace with my workshops. In total, by the end of the fieldwork, I had conducted eight 80-

minute drama workshops. To ensure that the children were not tired, the workshops took place during two time slots early in the day, namely 07:45-09:05 or 09:20-10:40.

II. Primary School Class no.2 (PC2)

Primary class 2 (PC2) belongs to a primary school that is situated in the heart of Limassol, Cyprus. According to the PS2 report (2012), PC2 celebrates diversity, since the majority of the students come from distinct social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Specifically, *“about two-fifths of the pupils are Greek-Cypriots while the others are of Syrian, Palestinian, British, Rumanian and Bulgarian origin. The second largest group concerns children from mixed marriages (Cypriot with other nationality)”* (second teacher’s interview on 12/04/2012). The majority of the children came from middle-class families, while a few came from lower-middle class and higher-middle class families (those whose parents worked in well-paid posts in the public or private sector). Overall, the parents were educated at secondary or higher education levels. The financial status of the majority of the children was average, while some children – coming from broken marriages or immigrant families – faced serious financial problems and were supported by the Parents’ Association (*ibid*).

Furthermore, percentages of students with learning difficulties or physically challenged children were low at the particular school. As far as language proficiency is concerned, the overall picture was encouraging: although

Greek was a second language for over 50% of the students, there was a marked improvement throughout the duration of their schooling, which was further aided by qualified GAL supporters and SEN teachers (*ibid*). By the time I entered the class, I recorded two cases which merit mention in terms of learning difficulties: a boy whose scholarly performance was below average and a girl who was struggling with Greek, because her family had recently relocated to Cyprus. However, their teacher described both as very willing to overcome the difficulties they were facing. Here, it is important to note that while the class was taught Greek as a core module, the boy mentioned above did individual work with the help of a SEN teacher, in a different class. Lastly, the head-teacher and class teacher noted an element that falls under the pedagogical and social aspect of this research, namely the fact that some of the children seemed to display characteristics of low self-esteem while they lacked confidence and basic social skills, especially when they had to work with classmates they did not get along with.

The children of PC2 often worked in four-member groups, a method which was promoted by the seating arrangement in their classroom. In order to safeguard communication, the teacher often changed the constitution of the groups while making sure that underachievers worked together with students with high performance levels. Effectively, the class teacher commented, the majority of the children seemed to lack quality characteristics of critical thinking; as she judged it, despite the fact that they could solve problems and think of alternatives, they did not possess critical dispositions and they did not search for alternative solutions

when faced with a problem or explored an issue in depth, unless she urged them to do so. Conversely, some children were said to be better able to improve their critical thinking skills, which she considered to be inextricably linked to their eagerness to actively participate in the learning process and share their thoughts freely.

The fieldwork in PC2 took place between early March 2012 and early June, with a short pause for the Easter holidays. I conducted the drama workshops during the Greek language and children's literature modules, which were part of their curriculum. The second unit of analysis (PC2) focused on a group of 20 nine-year-old children. The aforementioned student did remedial work with the help of the SEN teacher during the same time slots, but because he wished to take part in the workshops, he requested that the remedial work be rescheduled. The class teacher wanted to attend the sessions too, and thus, willingly allowed me to use some of her sessions for the purposes of my research. Here, it is important to note that the class teacher (who was also assistant head-teacher) was the only one among the three class teachers who suggested that I conduct the drama workshops during the classes of the Greek language module, an essential core module, which effectively meant that she placed the same degree of importance on both the language and the drama modules. Her point of view was based on the fact that drama served as a medium of Greek language teaching in the latest revised primary curriculum. Therefore, instead of proposing that I use time allotted to secondary modules such as Physical Education, Music and Art, curriculum standards and requirements notwithstanding, she decided to offer her students the

opportunity to experience drama as a new way of learning (interview, 2/2/2012). This does not mean that the other teachers were less willing to contribute; on the contrary, they commented on the workshops they had attended, offered insight into my observation notes, and shared their own points of view in terms of interpretation.

III. Primary School Class no.3 (PC3)

Primary class 3 (PC3) is a class at a primary school (PS3) located in the suburbs of Limassol, in a relatively big village. According to the PS3 report (2012), all the students were of Greek-Cypriot origin; the majority of them came from the lower-middle class, while there were a few from the middle class. The educational level of their parents was low to medium, with a recent survey revealing that most of them were high school graduates and some of them held a college diploma. During her interview on 23/04/2012, the third class teacher told me that the financial situation of the majority of the students was average while there were a few children whose families struggled financially (for example, children whose parents were separated, divorced, unemployed or had low paid jobs) and therefore received support from the Parents' Association. In the same interview, the class teacher stated that the socio-economic background of the children negatively affected their behaviour and way of learning to a great extent: she told me that most of these students were reluctant to participate in the learning process, as they did not consider education very important. At the same time,

according to the teacher, they faced serious problems related to bullying and gender discrimination, which were in all likelihood a reproduction of patterns they had witnessed at home. This prevented them from effectively cooperating with their classmates while the boys refused to work with girls, or even to sit with them. Although the teacher tried out different forms of accommodating students in groups of four, in lines or in the shape of an open square, she had difficulties in promoting cohesion and group work among her students. She considered the level of their learning capacity and their critical thinking as medium to low since, apart from their learning difficulties, most of the children lacked indispensable attitudes for critical thinking development, such as the critical attitudes and the disposition to be open and reflective. She told me in interview that these children responded the same way their parents would; *“Children — especially the boys — are so affected by their parental models they tend to behave in the same way. Most of the times, when I ask them to defend their arguments, they mention their dad or mum as a point of reference regarding gender roles”* (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012). Only the girls were said to be more reflective; as I was to discover, they were affected by their background as strongly as the boys, which is something that guided the way they responded to the drama questions, as it will be explained in the analysis section.

The fieldwork in PC3 took place between late March 2012 and early June. I held the drama workshops within various “secondary” modules, as the teacher refused to allot either literacy or Mathematics time (i.e. core modules) to the research. Be that as it may, these secondary modules concerned subjects such

as History, Geography and Social Sciences, and not modules such as Music, Art or Physical Education. The latter, in fact, were considered by the first and third class teachers to be redundant; these teachers maintained that the aim of covering the curriculum standards regarding the core modules took priority over giving students the opportunity to express themselves in creative ways. The case study in PC3 focused on a group of 19 nine-year-old children. The workshops took place once a week, on different days according to the availability of the school schedule and the teacher who was teaching the secondary module I was supposed to replace with my workshops.

3.2. The class teachers' professional background and contribution

The teachers who offered their classes as units of observation and analysis were all trained as primary school teachers and held postgraduate degrees in relevant fields. All of them had been teaching for over 15 years while the second class teacher held the position of assistant head-teacher. Despite the fact that none of them were trained to teach drama either at university or in training seminars, they were all willing to grant me access to their classes because they acknowledged the value of the arts in the teaching process (Interviews: First class teacher: 23/01/2012; Second class teacher: 12/04/2012; Third class teacher: 23/03/2012). During the fieldwork, the first class teacher only attended the first four workshops, because the rest took place during times when other teachers were supposed to be teaching those particular children. The second class teacher

attended all the workshops because she wanted to observe how her children responded within the drama context while the third class teacher attended the majority of the workshops depending on her teaching duties. Regardless of the extent to which the class teachers managed to attend the drama workshops, their willingness to discuss their children's responses, or even any unexpected behaviours noted, was of paramount importance for the process of my fieldwork.

3.3. School Premises: their use and overall impact

Due to the fact that drama education is a new field in Cyprus, its demands in terms of resources and space are not met. To accommodate the drama sessions in the first primary school class, the school offered the assembly hall, which was highly unsuitable; being a vast, noisy, multi-purpose facility which included the school's storage room, it did not meet the requirements of a drama workshop. What is more, the hall was occasionally used for various classes, such as Physical Education classes when the weather did not allow outdoor sports. As the staff was not informed of the forthcoming drama sessions, some teachers often brought their classes to the hall and claimed the space, which meant valuable time was lost. As for PC2 and PC3, the drama sessions took place in the classrooms, which were also unsuitable; as they were quite small and furnished with desks and chairs, little room was left for the workshop. Lack of resources was another issue, which forced me to carry props and research tools around the schools. To safeguard the integrity of the workshops and my research objectives, I had to continuously acknowledge

the settings of my research and practices and adjust to the given situations (O'Toole, 2006, p.57). To begin with, as stated in the analysis chapter, a major issue was lack of discipline and cooperation on behalf of the participants, owing to their unfamiliarity with the concept of following rules. Additionally, there was the issue of time. The fact that workshops took place in the assembly room (PC1) or their own classrooms (PC2, PC3) meant that I either had to move around classroom furniture, to provide space for the workshop or escort the children from and to their classroom, both of which were particularly time-consuming. To tackle this matter, the teachers and I agreed during the pre-workshop observations that the workshops should take place either at the start of the day or after the break, which allowed for the above-noted space adjustments.

3.4. A Change of Plan due to Practical Constraints

Prior to the implementation of my fieldwork, I carried out interviews with all the teachers, which provided the opportunity to discuss the theme of the workshop which I was going to work on with their class. The theme was designed taking into consideration contemporary social problems in Cyprus, the children, their age-specific concerns and interests, the teachers' suggestions as well as various setbacks emanating from a deeply-rooted conservatism in the society of Cyprus as a whole. In specific, although most teachers viewed the themes favourably, some had objections. For PC1, the initial idea was the disappearance of a minor, connected to a potential kidnapping by a stranger. However, the first

class teacher and the head-teacher argued that this theme would be more appropriate for older children while they expressed concern over the feedback that students would give to their parents. This was one of many occasions on which the overarching principle of keeping parents happy defined scholarly decisions. Albeit contrary to my wishes as a researcher, I acknowledged the fear related to the highly sensitive issue of kidnapping and the connotations of sexual abuse and agreed to maintain the balance and design alternative activities related to the concepts of diversity and bullying.

In the course of the fieldwork, particular revisions and modifications were deemed necessary to deal with various parameters that related to the students' dispositions. Specifically, as it became clear that certain children, especially from the third class, displayed unwillingness or incapability to cooperate with their classmates, I decided to employ activities that required group and pair work. Furthermore, to tackle many children's lack of confidence, I implemented games at the beginning of the sessions and conventions that fostered a friendly setting and encouraged a more active participation.

3.5. Summary

This chapter has presented the contextual parameters of my fieldwork, such as the sample of the study and their specific social and learning characteristics, the class teachers' professional background and contribution, the school premises and the practical constraints that led to the modification of my

initial plans of the fieldwork in terms of the content and general approach. All these elements were taken into consideration prior to the design of the lesson plans for the fieldwork with the intention of taking advantage of this information and eliminating the potential constraints that might appear during the workshops. This information was also of great importance when analysing my data, when attempting to understand a phenomenon or a case or trying to interpret the participants' and their class teachers' responses.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will present the reasons particular **methodologies** such as: “*case study*”, “*reflective practitioner*” and “*ethnography*” and **methods** such as: observation, interviews, research journals, critical friends and drama conventions were chosen for the purposes of this study. Apart from examining their definitions, I demonstrate how and why they were employed in my project, and outline the challenges they presented with reference to the sample under investigation. What is more, the ethical considerations pertinent to my research, various problems that led to revising the methodology and the way data has been coded, collated and analysed are also discussed.

4.2. Research Methodology: *Bricolage* in the Interpretive Tradition

My research has been informed by a range of methodologies (case study, reflective practitioner and ethnography) in what is commonly called *bricolage* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kincheloe, 2001). *Bricolage* deals with the complexity of the objects of inquiry and their being-in-the-world as well as the way human beings and their subjectivities are constructed. Unlike followers of the positivistic paradigm, *bricoleurs* perceive their presence and reality as constructed in multiple dimensions which are not fixed (Law, 2004, p.69), while they appreciate social structures as shaping or constraining individual subjectivity in complex ways (as

opposed to determining it). In essence, *bricolage* revolves around rather than attempting to eradicate the axis of subjectivity in the sense that it tries to understand the parameters which shape it (*ibid*).

These multiple perspectives aimed to be achieved by *bricoleurs* provide the latter with different research orientations and theoretical dimensions that enable them to hold a dimension of criticality, see anew and move towards new levels of understanding of the subjects, purposes, and nature of inquiry (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). Research *bricolage*, as articulated here, follows the interpretivist paradigm due to the emphasis I intended to place on the children's thinking, ideas and the associated meanings that children conveyed in relation to the various drama contexts they found themselves in in combination with the real social context of their lives (Neuman, 2000, p.71); what is more, this relates to the reconstruction of those meanings by empathetically communicating with them as a "*passionate participant*" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.115).

Similarly to the concept of *bricolage*, the theoretical framework of interpretivism stipulates the idea that the world is dependent on our knowledge of it, and that any form of knowledge or action is a socially constructed product (Grix, 2004, p.83), while it relies upon the subjective perceptions that humans hold of the world (Blaikie, 1993). In this vein, I focused my attention on the interpretation of the data gathered through various qualitative methods, as explained below, acknowledging the difference between describing a situation/response and understanding it (Kincheloe *et al.*, 2011).

Another focus was my own subjectivity (O'Toole, 2006, p.42) and the importance of reflexivity in terms of considering and reconsidering issues of biases or “*inequalities in power*” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.25) in the research process and their impact on the data produced, as well as the need to capture the individuality of the cases under investigation (Corbetta, 2003, p.24). According to Kincheloe (2005), the implementation of bricolage in such contexts implies:

“connecting the object of inquiry to the many contexts in which it is embedded”; “appreciating the relationship between researcher and that being researched”; “connecting the making of meaning to human experience”; “making use of textual forms of analysis while not losing sight that living and breathing human beings are the entities around which and with which meaning is being made” and “building a bridge between these forms of understanding and informed action” (Kincheloe, 2005, p.342).

Bricoleurs affirm that these interpretive connections and understandings are usually deemed as irrelevant in the conventional forms of research (Kincheloe, 2005, p.342), whereas interpretivism is seen to entail a degree of “*uncertainty*” (Denscombe, 2002, p.21) and, thus not claiming to be representative of social reality in any absolute sense since the social actors’ insights are developed on the basis of “*imperfect knowledge and complex motivations*” (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p.25). Due to the fact that these perceptions are additionally interpreted by social researchers, this context is also accused of lack of credibility; as Giddens (1986) explains it, it is considered as a “*double hermeneutic*” (p.284).

A response to this criticism comes from Mack (2010), who claims that all research, especially qualitative, is subjective and orientates the researcher towards their projects from the moment they choose their paradigm and involve themselves in the research. The acknowledgement of this inevitability in this kind of contexts is important, for as King *et al.* (1994) state: “*a researcher who fails to face the issue of uncertainty directly is either asserting that she knows everything perfectly, or that she has no idea how certain or uncertain results are*” (p.9). Indeed, the use of *bricolage* as informed by interpretivism still strives to take an inter-subjective, if not an objective, stance (Laing, 1967, p.66) by connecting assumptions and looking at the data thoroughly so that the researchers understand what is going on in the environment instead of elaborating on their own preconceptions.

4.3. Main Research Methodology: Case Study

The goal of this research has not been to produce a definite answer to the question “*Can drama be used to cultivate children’s critical thinking?*”, but to examine how drama might be used to enhance children’s critical thinking which itself might lead to further questions and research. Therefore, the particular phraseology of the question, “*What happens when I teach participatory drama to upper primary students in Cyprus with the intention of enhancing their critical thinking?*” determined the research methodology employed in this project, namely the case study. This was considered the appropriate method because, as Winston (2006) emphasises, a major advantage of case study is that it allows answering

“*how*” and “*why*” questions posed when the boundaries between the phenomenon under investigation and the context are somewhat blurred (p.1, 13). In this vein, my project has explored the following general “how” and “why” questions within three particular contexts: “How can drama contribute to the improvement of critical thinking in children?”; “Why does drama contribute, if indeed it does, to the enhancement of children’s critical thinking?” In addition, as Yin (2003) puts it, the issue of critical thinking is not “readily distinguishable from its context” (p.4) but it is rather developed and shaped by the “*complex of variables involved in educational realities*” (Stenhouse, 1983, p.18).

According to Robert Stake (1995), one of the leading theorists in the field, case study constitutes a popular methodology in educational research and is a very wide methodological category. It seeks to investigate and understand particular complex issues, people’s behaviours (perceptions, reactions, and actions), events and phenomena in depth and in their natural contexts, people’s real life, highlighting both their uniqueness and commonality. It attempts to present “*what it is like*” (Geertz, 1973 cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p.290) to be in a certain situation, to catch that “*close-up reality*” (*ibid*) and “*thick description*” (*ibid*). In Stake’s (1995) words, case study is “*the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances*” (p.xi). This project entails an embedded⁷, multiple case study with

⁷ According to Yin (2003), embedded case studies are studies in which different levels or sources of data are collected. Baxter and Jack (2008) cite the benefit of embedded case design to “*illuminate the case through analysis within the subunits separately (within case analysis), between the different subunits (between case analysis) or across all of the subunits (cross-case analysis) (italics in original)*” (p.550). Taking into account all the above arguments of Yin (2003), Stake (1995) and

three units of analysis; it involves three classes of 9-year-old children in Cyprus, with a particular focus on what was happening while using drama to open up possibilities for their critical thinking enhancement.

Other theorists such as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), MacDonald and Walker (1975) and Yin (2003), support the argument about the suitability of case study in terms of revealing elements and details of human behaviour that would be difficult to notice and examine otherwise. As Yin (2003) explains, case study “allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events” (*ibid*, p.2), and as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) concur, it is concerned with the “rich and vivid description” (p.317) of the events within the case. Additionally, in MacDonald and Walker’s (1975) words, the exploration of a case holistically reveals “truths about human condition” (p.3) and importantly, it reveals how and why humans act in particular contexts and situations. Considering the above, in combination with the situated character of educational research (Winston, 1998) and education in general (Bruner, 1974) and not wishing to idealise my project’s approach and results (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.11-12), I strove to explore the implications that drama might have in the enhancement of critical thinking in children in a real school-life context. As noted earlier, this aim was compounded by factors such as space constrictions as well as “constraints of curriculum, time [...] as faced the class teachers” (Winston, 1998, p.80).

Baxter and Jack (2008), this type of embedded design of a multiple case study was selected purposively, in an effort to explore what happens when using drama for the purposes of enhancing critical thinking across three cases, three 4th grade primary school classes in Cyprus used as units of analysis.

“The search for certainty, comparison and conclusiveness tends to drive out alternative ways of seeing”, Simons (1996, p.237) underlines, and therefore, case study *“can be linked to the knowledge generated by the best forms of drama”* (Winston, 2006, p.44). As Winston (2006) claims, the benefits that case study provides — understanding through other perspectives, facing problems that might not have been seen before and questioning what had remained unquestioned until now — are important elements for drama (*ibid*, p.44). O'Toole (2006) elaborates on this argument further, claiming that case study is seen as one of the most appropriate research methodologies for drama because it enables *“the structures, processes and outcomes of a project”* (*ibid*, p.46) to be surveyed. According to him, a limitation that case studies may have is the lack of generalisability, parallels with the approaches towards drama, which are based on a *“‘framed context’ and a bounded case”* (O'Toole, 2006, p.46). This means that the participants' meanings, responses and social interactions within the drama context are unique and cannot be reproduced. In contrast, they can be analysed and studied holistically as a *“single unit of experience”* in order to understand their complexity (*ibid*). It is these social relationships possibly created between the participants of drama, and the challenge of looking at the complexity of each case that necessitated the use of case study to explore and analyse the process and outcomes of this project.

In this line of reasoning, Cohen *et al.* (2011) argue in favour of the appropriateness of case study as a research methodology; as they explain, its hallmark is that of significance that gains researchers' attention and interest and motivates them to get insights into the real dynamics of people and conditions. To

them, anything can be key to understanding a behaviour or a situation; “*a subject might only demonstrate a particular behavior once, but it is so important as not to be ruled out simply because it occurred once; sometimes a single event might occur which sheds a hugely important insight into a person or situation*” (p.294). In order for the exploration of the drama-based learning — which was designed to enhance critical thinking — to be meaningful and, by extension, resourceful and efficient in terms of informing theory and subsequent practice, this methodological advantage of case study provided me with all things needed for making sense of my project.

Winston’s (1998) argument that “*case studies are stories – contextualized*” (p.80) was also among the main reasons why I chose case study as the basic methodology for my research; the ways in which the project was designed or modified and conducted in each case, the principles and practices that structured it and the responses that it stimulated, all form the story “*of the evolution, development and experience of the particular case*” (Simons, 2009, p.147). As Merseeth (1991) emphasises, case studies are something more than just the case material because, in her words, the “*cases and the discussions of them are complementary and are both important*” (*ibid*, p.5); thus, they can be maintained for constant analysis. In developing my case studies, I will make the protagonists (the participants of the workshops) in the story central. As I will explain explicitly later on, their story will be based on a series of observations (focusing on their responses within the drama contexts each time) and interviews conducted with them before, during and after the workshops. Therefore, the report of the function

of drama in terms of enhancing critical thinking in children is constructed as an interpretive narrative that will analyse the story of each case.

4.3.1. My Case Study Project

The function of the project was explored in three different primary classes (PC) of 9-year-old students of three different national schools in Cyprus, in the context of different curricular subjects. The aim was to draw attention to what happens when using drama and alternative “as if” contexts for the purposes of enhancing children’s critical thinking on the terms that each context indicated (Simons, 2009) throughout twenty-four 80-minute workshops (eight 80-minute workshops in each class). This produced an estimated total of 32 hours of drama workshops for all classes. The workshops took place between early February 2012 and early June 2012, as the school year was coming to an end (PC1:03/02/2012-24/03/2012; PC2:14/04/2012-01/06/2012; PC3:30/04/2012-08/06/2012) and were conducted on the school premises (PC1: assembly hall; PC2: classroom; PC3: classroom) on different days according to the availability of the school schedule and the class teachers’ timetable and preference on the subject they chose to replace with drama.

The reason I chose to conduct a case study in three educational institutions (a multiple case study with three units of analysis) was because I assumed that this would yield richer data about the impact my project had on particular groups of children and would thus give me a clearer picture of their responses in various

drama contexts (Stake, 1995). The classes of 9-year-old students were preferred because the curriculum design for that specific year and class is the most practical compared to the rest of the classes embedded in Primary Education in Cyprus and would therefore enable me to implement my fieldwork more easily. The three classes used as units of analysis were understood firstly in terms of 61 participants as students (PC1:22; PC2:20; PC3:19) and their teachers, and, in temporal terms, as the entirety of the time the participants were in the classroom. A selection criterion of the schools was that, according to the Cyprus Ministry of Education, these children had no opportunity to experience drama as part of their learning — or even as an extra-curricular activity. This was a unique opportunity which enabled me to look at the children's and their class teachers' attitudes towards the whole experience, and in particular, the path towards the development of critical thinking through drama.

In general, the factors that differentiated each case are anchored in formal educational factors that determined each school as an institution and were related to the singularity of each social group of children. Both the official structures of each educational institution and the particularity of the educational *modus vivendi* of each social group generated the need to focus on the uniqueness of each case (Simons, 2009). Thus, I avoided researching the three schools as representative examples of institutions, and I strove to interpret the meanings of each social group in its own terms. To this end, I did not classify the project in the categories of “*critical cases, extreme cases, typical cases, and heterogeneous cases*” (Patton, 2002, p.452). In contrast, emphasis was placed on figuring out educational patterns

and the social relations and responses that constructed the reality of each class; the case of PC3 was an example of extensive correlations to these elements, as described in the chapter of analysis. In this manner, my aim was both to understand “how” the project functioned for each social group, as well as to interpret “why” the fieldwork was oriented or developed in the way it did (Yin, 2003, p.1).

Based on the above, my case study can mainly be characterised as *instrumental*, a characterisation used where “*a case is chosen to explore an issue or research question determined on some other ground, that is, the case is chosen to gain insight or understanding into something else*” (Stake, 1995, p.3-4 cited in Simons, 2009, p.21). Notwithstanding, this classification does not reject the significance of **intrinsic elements** because a more informed picture of the area under study cannot be achieved if the idiosyncrasy of each case and its social context are not acknowledged and interpreted (*ibid*).

The following points epitomise the intrinsic and instrumental sub-questions of my fieldwork:

- **Intrinsic sub-questions**

- What are the participants’ educational experiences?

- What is the participants’ relation with drama?

- How could this fieldwork respond or be adapted to their previous experiences?

- Does the process influence their social interaction? If so, how?

- **Instrumental sub-questions**

- How can critical thinking be framed by drama conventions?

- How can I, the teacher, shape drama pedagogy to engage students' critical thinking?

- How can I, the teacher, use stories in order to engage students' critical thinking?

- How do students respond to the process?

- How can we recognise instances of critical thinking in drama when they are happening?

- Why did they respond in this way?

- Is there any evidence that some children think more critically when they are emotionally engaged?

Here it is important to note that the particular phraseology of my main research question: *"What happens when I teach participatory drama to upper primary students in Cyprus with the intention of enhancing their critical thinking?"* touches on the **exploratory** type of case study given that it does not have clearly defined outcomes (Yin, 2003, p.15). Nevertheless, this classification does not exclude its **explanatory** interest due to the aim of the study to develop a theory about the relationship between drama and the area of critical thinking.

4.3.2. Limitations of Case Studies

Criticism of the case study as a research methodology often relates to the subjectivity of the researchers (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.292). Based on their knowledge, expertise and dispositions, researchers are the ones that subjectively choose the research paradigms, questions posed and the processes of data collection and analysis while they constantly challenge their approach and judge the significance of their data. In this manner, the key determinant of the quality of case study research is the quality of the insights and thinking particular researchers offer and because of this, no matter how rigorous they attempt to be, the study is not, and cannot be fully objective. Simons (2009) maintains that subjectivity is a basic characteristic of case studies while she does not consider it as a weakness because, as she explains, this can lead to a better understanding of the cases under study while it is conducive to more informed interpretations. From a different point of view, Cohen *et al.* (2011, p.293) see all these processes prone to problems of the researcher's bias, notwithstanding the implication reflexivity has. In response to this critique, Simons (2009) admits that reflexivity, a term explained later on, is essential in case studies, as it can control and discipline their nature and, more importantly, their subjectivity related to the data analysis.

A further challenge the case study researchers have to face is the degree of generalisation they could achieve due to the focus placed on the particular rather than the general (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.293; Thomas, 2011, p.3). This is because a single set of “*uncorroborated observations*” (Thomas, 2011, p.3) or even a set of incidents, based entirely on the experiences of a single person or a group of people,

is unique and cannot be repeated, reproduced or applied easily to other settings. Hence, they cannot serve as a sample of a broader demography or as a platform for making connections with the wider population (*ibid*). As a result, this research becomes less valuable and reliable for the stakeholders and, by extension, society (Kincheloe, 2003).

To refute this argument, Robson (2002, p.183) and Yin (2003, p.15) highlight that the objective of case studies is primarily to reflect the individual elements that pertain to it, which explains why researchers make analytic (as opposed to statistical) generalisations based on them. In other words, a researcher has to examine a case study to establish whether its methodology can be applied to similar cases. In the case of statistical generalisations, the focus is on calculating the frequency, numbers and trends and applying the findings on the wider population (*ibid*).

Stake (2005) proposes an alternative empirical approach to generalisation in case studies, that is, the “*naturalistic generalisation*” (p.443). Within this concept, single case design attempts “*to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it*” (*ibid*); thus, people’s understanding can be developed and enhanced using reports of the case which “*provide a maximum of vicarious experience to the readers who may then intuitively combine this with their previous experiences*” (Stake & Trumbull, 1982, p.1). This is related to Stake’s (2005) notions of transferability or external validity, or in other words, to “*the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations*” (p.458). Within this notion, readers of certain studies can make connections with their own cases or

situations and choose the relevant characteristics; however, as Stake (2005) warns, knowledge has to be transferred in a safe and substantiated way to readers, in order for all common, different and new issues to be easily noticed and understood.

4.4. Adopting the Lens of the Reflective Practitioner

Reflective practice was first introduced by Schön in 1983 as a research methodology embedded in the area of interpretivism, whereby a given phenomenon or behaviour is examined through direct experience, and, it is understood, interpreted and perceived through the insights it affords the observer (O'Toole, 2006, p.56). This methodology is widely acknowledged as “*an ongoing and continuous self- inquiry into one’s own professional practice*” (Taylor, 2000, cited in Neelands, 2006, p.17) and as an indispensable element of the teachers’ professional development (Schön, 1991; Neelands, 2006). The practitioners adopt the standpoints of a spectator outside of themselves, from as many angles as possible, to critically examine their actions and make situations and participants more comprehensible aiming to understand how the processes of teaching and learning could be more effective (Gallagher, 2000; Greene, 2001; Neelands, 2006).

Dewey (1933) pinpoints reflection as the kind of thinking associated with “*active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the future conclusions to which it tends*” (p.7). In what this entails, teachers’ practices are informed by

reflective thinking, which gives rise to a modification in consequent reflective action so as to improve the quality of their teaching and enhance their students' learning (*ibid*). This cannot be achieved automatically as a form of routine practice; as Dewey (1910, p.4-5) explains, routine practices are usually driven by a disposition to accept the most common and almost obvious ways of solving problematic situations. Effectively, no attempt is made to actively scrutinise their teaching or experiment with alternative perspectives; rather, emphasis is placed towards the accomplishment of specific ends usually guided by factors such as institutional goals, society and culture (*ibid*). On these terms, Dewey (1910) admits that reflective practitioner methodology leads teachers to unceasingly question their roles and to consider actively changing their routines and premeditated agendas extemporaneously to accommodate children's needs at a given moment.

Linked to this process is Neelands' (2006) argument that reflective practice is substantial because it provides the teaching process with the potential to be systematically questioned, and modified according to the needs of each research project and the challenges of each social context. For him, reflective practice does not fall under the same category with other models of research, as it is:

"[...] a way of life"; "It refers to the nurturing and development of life-long dispositions and the on-going and continuous self-inquiry into one's own professional practice. [It] does not bracket off episodes of practice for scrutiny; rather [it] continuously and persistently scrutinizes practice on a daily basis across a professional life time. In order to be effective the reflective practitioner strives to be self-knowing as well as other-knowing"

(Neelands, 2006, p.17).

“Self-knowledge” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.565) is part of “*conscious awareness*” (*ibid*), which constitutes the principal process towards self-correction and transformation because it enables practitioners to:

“[...] *become alert to clues about how it may be possible to transform the practices they are producing and reproducing through their current ways of working. If their current practices are the product of one particular set of intentions, conditions, and circumstances, other (transformed) practices may be produced and reproduced under other (or transformed) intentions, conditions and circumstances*” (*ibid*).

In keeping with Freire’s (1998a) argument that “*to teach cannot be reduced to a superficial or externalised contact with the object or its content but extends to the production of the conditions in which critical learning is possible*” (p.33), the *reflective practitioner* approach seemed to be highly appropriate for this project. Through this means, teachers also function as researchers who use “*their own instrument themselves to raise the questions of inquiry, to process how those questions will be investigated*” (Taylor, 1996, p.40); in this case, as the teacher-researcher of this project, I was able to reflect on my own pedagogy and practice, criticise and strive to understand the effectiveness of my approach. Most importantly, this methodology was employed due to its capacity to empower teachers as agents of social change and to maintain a social-democratic model of schooling, which promotes the children’s initiative and involvement, a fundamental

idea in my study (Neelands, 2006, p.21-24).

4.4.1. The Reflective Examination of My Practice

The reflection of my own professional knowledge and pedagogical practice was viewed as a desired challenge because it affirmed my intention to “*transcend the boundaries of a fixed reality*” (Taylor, 2000, p.87) and to adopt a self-corrective disposition that allows to change “*with others*” (hooks, 1994, p.109). In respect to this attempt, fundamental theories underpinning the reflective practice were incorporated into my methodology to strengthen the case study, as follows.

Reflective practice, as pioneered by the American philosopher Donald Schön (1987), is linked to an alternative epistemology of practice in which practitioners impress as connoisseurs and critics and understand the knowledge inherent in practice as “*artful doing*” (*ibid*, p.123). In this manner, he implies a model of reflective practice, which incorporates three dynamic concepts:

a) *Knowing in action*: This concept is identified with information resulting from certain sources such as training, as well as practical, professional, existential and theoretical knowledge that affect the teacher-researcher’s practice, behaviours and meditations in relation to classroom experiences (Neelands, 2006, p.19; O’Toole, 2006, p.57). My practice was informed by the theoretical and practical knowledge I had gained through my degrees in Education Science and Drama Education, as well as through

my work experience as a drama practitioner, a primary school teacher and a researcher.

b) *Reflection-in-action*: This notion attempts to bring up the active and non-propositional *modus operandi* through which new knowing-in-action is settled; it involves the practitioners' reflections on their practices and their immediate and intuitive responses to unforeseen episodes (Schön, 1991). Thinking on my feet (Taylor, 2006, p.57) and acting on the spot were facilities often required of me, since I could not always predict the children's responses and reactions during drama activities. One example of this is when I employed drama conventions such as *teacher in role* and I had to be capable of reacting on the spot as well as performing and building on the children's responses to dramatic events. This also applied when I had to use certain intervention pedagogic techniques to tackle any problematic behaviours that surfaced during drama workshops.

c) *Reflection-on-action*: This concept operates after the teaching process in order to assess its efficacy, discern what has led to unexpected outcomes and consider changes and alternatives that could improve their practice (Schön, 1987; Neelands, 2006). For the purposes of this project, Neelands' (2006) suggestion that "*the interpretation of data must be problematised, so that they can see from other angles, rather than just from the perspective of the individual reflective practitioner*" (p.33) was considered. Therefore, a discussion between me, the critical friends and the class teachers (when this was convenient) (Gallagher, 2000) took place

after the workshops, in order to share observations and insights and distinguish the conventions and the elements of pedagogy that had worked well with children so as to repeat them or build on them. Another objective of these discussions was to think of ways for improving my practice (Neelands, 2006; O'Toole, 2006) as well as point out any problems that came to light and how these could have been dealt with through my pedagogy (O'Toole, 2006, p.57).

4.4.2. Reflective Practice and Reflexivity

A central notion giving momentum to the concept of the reflective practitioner and which entails both the researchers' personal reflection and the wider social critique is reflexivity (Ruby, 1980). Reflective practitioners immerse themselves in "*critical self-reflection*" (*ibid*, p.154) processes; in other words, they reflect critically on the ramifications caused by their own background, conceptions, attitudes, dispositions, feelings and stances as well as by the broader structural or colloquial, ideological, historical and political context. Upon reaching that point, they attempt to be honest and ethically mature in their research practice, to acknowledge that knowledge develops within the world and not outside it and to identify, state and act upon the limitations of their research project (*ibid*).

The often contradictory or vague definition of the terms reflexivity, reflection and critical reflection in the literature and the wrong presumption that

these are interchangeable led Finlay and Gough (2003, p.ix) to explain that these concepts should be understood as forming a continuum; at one extreme stands reflection, described as “*thinking about*” (*ibid*) something after an incident; in the middle stands critical reflection as defined above and; at the other end stands reflexivity as a more dynamic instant manner, which demands the constant employment of self-awareness or as Bolton (2009) puts it, “*the ability to render aspects of the self strange*” (p.xix); that is, the reflexive researchers detach themselves from their habitual ways of perceiving themselves, their world, their relations to others and attempt to look at their beliefs, values and behaviours critically, as if from the outside. In Fook’s (2002) words,

“[r]eflexivity is a stance of being able to locate oneself in the picture, to appreciate how one’s own self influences [actions and] is potentially more complex than being reflective, in that the potential for understanding the myriad ways in which one’s own presence and perspective influence the knowledge and actions which are created is potentially more problematic than the simple searching for implicit theory” (p.43).

Being both reflective and reflexive has been vital for my study, as it enabled me to capture and improve the dynamic nature of the process instead of just mastering it (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.xiii). In keeping with Sandelowski and Barroso’s (2002) words,

“[r]eflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account

of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. Reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share” (p.222).

Reflexivity was central to the conceptual and practical framework of my entire inquiry not only in terms of issues of quality and validity, but also, as ethical practice (Guilemin & Gillam, 2004). For this reason, I sought to use it as a tool for ethical alertness in order to pinpoint and admit ethical issues and dilemmas that could surface during and after the drama sessions, as well as issues that might lack accuracy, or be ambiguous. A detailed analysis of how I employed reflexivity in this project can be found in the following paragraphs, where the methods I approached are discussed.

4.5. Identifying Ethnography

Ethnography constitutes a popular methodology in anthropological, sociological and educational research and is a very wide methodological category firmly located within the qualitative research paradigm. In this sense, it is a convenient tool for identifying with the perspectives of the people studied for a prolonged period of time, and the meanings given to and placed on their actions

(Stevick & Levinson, 2007, p.189). As Robson (2002) explains, ethnography focuses on “[...] *data free from imposed external concepts and ideas [or, in other words,] “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) which allows others to understand the culture from inside in the terms that the participants themselves used to describe what is going on*” (p.143).

Following an etymological analysis of the term, ethnography originates from the Greek word-noun “*ethnos*” meaning “*people*” and the verb “*grapho*”, which is the equivalent of the attic verb “*graphein*” and means “*to write*” (Stevick & Levinson, 2007, p.189). Combining “*ethnos*” with “*graphein*” literally means writing about people or studying a group of people who evolve within a culture; that is, a set of behavioural patterns and beliefs that frame “[...] *standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it*” (Goodenough, 1971, p.21-22). In this sense, as Wiersma (1986) states, ethnography is concerned with what lies beneath human existence and with what this entails; who people are, what they look like and how they act or interact.

The origins of ethnography are found in nineteenth-century Western anthropology, whereby researchers were to become accepted members of a particular group of people for extended periods of time so as to understand it and describe it in detail (Robson, 2002, p.142). Since the researchers’ attempt is to comprehend the situation and the actions being observed from the participants’ viewpoint, then, ethnographers are supposed to make the familiar strange; to study cultural phenomena as outsiders (to whom they are strange) while trying to

understand them from the viewpoint of the insiders (to whom they are familiar) (Gall *et al.*, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). According to O'Connell-Davidson & Layder (1994), “*in order to truly grasp the lived experience of people from their point of view, one has to enter into relationships with them, and hence disturb the natural setting*” (p.165).

Observation based on natural settings is a central feature of ethnography and it is in agreement with the concepts of the “*thick description*” (Geertz, 1973, p.18) and contextualisation; data are to be used and interpreted in the context of the situation in which they are observed (Wiersma, 1986). In this vein, a holistic approach towards data as a whole is required in order to gain a better understanding of the observable case (Tuckman, 1999; Wiersma, 1986). Under other conditions, any cultural interpretation renders the research “*vacant*” (Geertz, 1973, p.18), partial and unfinished (*ibid*). Ideally, the researcher aims to triangulate different sources of information and data, i.e. participant observation, interview, documents and artefacts in order to develop a holistic understanding of the community observed (O'Toole, 2006, p.41). However, the most common and valuable sources of data in ethnography are these drawn from participant observations, interviews and informal discussions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3).

Typically, ethnography does not orient the hypothesis prior to the research (Gay & Airasian, 1992; Robson, 2011; Tuckman, 1999; Wiersma, 1986). The hypothesis, the more detailed research questions and the objective of the study will emerge and evolve as the study proceeds and the data collection is undertaken (*ibid*). Since the central aim of ethnography is to collect and offer details of the

case, and since these details become the basis of the interpretation of the case, the absence of specific hypotheses or strict orientations at the preliminary phase benefit the researchers in terms of turning aside any ideas produced from the hypothesis which might guide or influence the accuracy of the interpretation (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Robson, 2002).

4.5.1. My Ethnographic Case Study

This work is not an ethnographic project; however, the transaction of some ethnographic elements worked to its benefit. These elements related to the children's contributions and responses towards certain issues they were presented with for the purposes of identifying whether and how different aspects of critical thinking might be enhanced through drama (Silverman, 2005, p.49). What is more, these qualities were in themselves useful for my study, as ethnography places students at the centre of inquiry (Gallagher, 2000, p.14) and "*demanding an understanding of how people think, feel, and act within their own naturalistic settings*" (Taylor, 1996, p.37). Recording and videotaping all the drama sessions, the children's actions and responses given at particular moments in drama activities and during the open-ended dialogues and interviews in combination with the reflection provided by the class teachers and the critical friends, offered opportunities to explore "*the processes themselves*" (Gallagher, 2000, p.14).

The use of the ethnographic lens in my study enabled me to give voice to my students-participants, to make them partners in inquiry and collaborate with

them so as to explore what, why, how they are learning and they are responding to certain issues they are presented with, either within imagined or actual classroom contexts, which is consistent with Nancie Atwell's (1987, p.87) approach on teaching models. This idea is vital in my project in terms of manifesting particular understandings of power relations and pedagogies underlying every kind of social interaction; building on the ideology underpinning critical pedagogy, as approached for the purposes of this research, the notion of children's voices and critical thinking is set as an aspiration to scrutinise.

Gallagher (2000) argues in favour of the appropriateness of ethnography as a research methodology for drama education on the basis that, with its rich description of events, it can grasp "*the process of classroom action and the spontaneity of reflection*" (2000, p.14), both of which are necessary elements to understand the meanings of events from the perspectives of those involved (*ibid*). As Donelan (1999) points out, drama and ethnography "*'share common aims' (sic) of examining, understanding and representing human experience*" (p.68). Therefore, due to the fact that the social interactions and meanings that the participants produce within the drama context are "*ephemeral*" (*ibid*) and unique and cannot be reproduced, ethnographic tools were required to study and analyse all the responses and information along with the social and cultural settings in which they occurred (*ibid*). Considering Gallagher's (2000) argument that ethnographic research "*is critical to drama research*" (p.13) in terms of deconstructing the dramatic processes, and then revealing a larger research picture of how it all came to be, the application of ethnographic elements here seemed to be essential for

negotiating meanings from the participants' insights (Gallagher, 2006, p.63). To this end, at the heart of my pedagogy as a drama practitioner and my approach as participant observer, as explained in the research methods sub-chapter, was the development of trust and empathetic skills (Donelan, 1999); a description and analysis of the ways in which this has been implemented will be presented in the analysis chapter.

4.5.2. Limitations of Ethnographic Approach

Similarly to the case study, subjectivity is an issue for which social research is often criticised (Hammersley, 1991). Ethnography, as a social research methodology usually informed by an interpretative paradigm, is embedded in this context due to the dual role of the researcher and the tension created between the researchers' objective observation and subjective participation, as well as their biases, preconceived notions, beliefs and values that might affect the processes of data collection and analysis (Fetterman, 1998; O'Toole, 2006). Consistent with interpretivism, ethnographers often start their projects with the hypothesis that their subjects are somehow unknown to the ethnographers while they act in a reasonable system yet to be defined (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, p.124). These challenges make it even more imperative for ethnographers to apply the research technique of triangulation to ensure an in-depth understanding of the study and the adoption of alternative approaches and interpretations of data (Hammersley, 1991). In turn, O'Toole (2006) states that although it is inevitable for researchers to enter a field

with preconceived ideas, they should adopt an “*open-minded and critically reflexive approach*” (*ibid*, p.42) in their attempt to control, challenge, modify or change these ideas and preconceptions as data occurs (*ibid*). As far as critical and drama pedagogy are concerned, O'Toole's (2006) ideas were taken into account when designing and implementing this project as well as in the process of analysing the data gathered from it.

Critics of ethnographic methodology stress the danger of jeopardising the relationship between researcher and participants according to the degree of the researchers' personal involvement and emotional engagement (Tedlock, 2000, p.465; Fielding & Schreier, 2001, p.151). In other words, the more deeply a researcher is engaged in the project, the easier it is for the objectivity of the data collected and analysed to be distorted (Hammersley, 1991; Fetterman, 1998). This phenomenon may distract researchers from their focus while participants may filter their behaviour and adapt their feedback so as to please the researchers, thereby seriously questioning the accuracy and validity of the findings. Here, too, the technique of triangulation can act as a safety net (Hammersley, 1991, p.185), while an interaction with the participants in a more natural manner is encouraged — that is, avoiding treating participants as research subjects or pressuring for a response, as this may result in loss of spontaneity, which is of paramount importance (Burns, 1994, p.82) when it comes to such research. In retrospect, I realise that my role as a teacher (rather than my role as a researcher) in combination with the ensemble nature of drama contributed inevitably to the development of a more personal relationship with the students that takes into account the complexities of power and

authority (Gallagher, 2000, p.15). All of our interactions in and out of the drama sessions were taken into account and informed my notes and my reflexive attitude as a researcher and as an active teacher (Donelan, 1999, p.69; O'Toole, 2006).

Reliability, both internal and external, has also been a major problem for ethnographies because their content is restricted to defined settings and interactions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011 p.286). As Burns (1994) explains, ethnographers tend to approach and study social conditions and behaviours as if its units were found in a certain place and time; these features do not easily allow replication in other settings or by other researchers. Conversely, due to the fact that my case studies were not ethnographic but rather informed by ethnographic concerns, in combination with the fact that every case was approached as unique, the interpretation that follows in the analysis chapter does not aim to lead to any generalisations.

4.6. Research Methods

This section presents a rationale for choosing particular research methods, such as **participant observations**, **research journals**, **interviews** and **drama conventions** for the collection and analysis of data; the characteristics of these methods; the ways of their employment; and how they complemented each other through the process of triangulation. A review of the ethical considerations taken into account and the ways in which data has been coded, collated and analysed, are also provided.

4.6.1. Summary of the research methods employed:

- ✓ **Participant observations:** These were held both directly and indirectly, and focused on the children's responses during the drama sessions.
- ✓ **Research Journal:** It was kept throughout the fieldwork for the purposes of recording observations (including the critical friends' and class teachers' comments) and reflecting on the events and the participants' responses.
- ✓ **Interviews:** These had two variations:
 - a) group interviews with the children;
 - b) one-to-one interviews with the class teachers, held during and at the end of the fieldwork.

✓ **Drama conventions:** These were used both as research and pedagogical tools during the entire drama workshop.

Table 1: Timeline of data collection in the three Primary school classes

Research Methods	Time	Data Collected
Participant observations	PC1: 03/02/12-23/03/12 PC2: 14/04/12-30/05/12 PC3: 30/04/12-07/06/12	Children's responses during twenty-four 80-minute workshops (eight workshops in each class).
Reflective Journals	PC1: 03/02/12-10/04/12 PC2: 14/04/12-30/05/12 PC3: 30/04/12-07/06/12	a) Recordings of all observations including critical friends' and class teachers' comments. b) Reflections on the events and participants' responses.
Drama Conventions	PC1: 03/02/12-23/03/12 PC2: 14/04/12-30/05/12 PC3: 30/04/12-07/06/12	Children's responses towards particular themes and opportunities for critical incidents to reveal
One-to-one	PC1: 23/01/12 and 24/03/12	Six 80-minute interviews

interviews	PC2: 12/04/12 and 01/06/12 PC3: 23/04/12 and 08/06/12	with the three class teachers
Group interviews	PC1: 17/02/12; 01/03/12 and 24/03/12 PC2: 03/05/12; 21/05/12 and 01/06/12 PC3: 09/05/12; 24/05/12 and 08/06/12	Nine 80-minute interviews with all children-participants

4.6.2. Observation

Observation is a research method defined as a prolonged period of time of constant social interaction between the researchers and the subjects, in the latter's environment for the purpose of "*making a qualitative analysis of [that environment]*" (Lofland, 1971, p.93) and of gathering "*via the senses*" (Foster, 1996, p.vii) data which take the form of field notes and are "*unobtrusively and systematically collected*" (Bogdan, 1972, p.3). For many researchers and theorists, observation constitutes the fundamental and most popular method of data collection in the educational and broader social sciences, especially in a qualitative research framework (Angrosino, 2005, p.729).

In this study, observation of the children's responses was employed as the principal research method primarily on account of its distinctive capacity to capture "live" (Paterson *et al.*, 2003, p.30) data and more importantly, human responses and behaviours "*in [their] broad natural context[s]*" (*ibid*). In this manner, it becomes very useful for the purposes of collecting and providing various context data embedded in different settings related to the physical environment, the human characteristics, the verbal interactions, the content of communication and its patterns, the curricula, the pedagogic approaches and styles, the sources and the way people introduce and present themselves to the outside world (*ibid*).

In a similar vein, Patton (2002) states that observation is required for explorations where nothing is either taken for granted or is pre-determined. This applies particularly to the context of education, where observation methods should be used for achieving a deep exploration and an insightful interpretation of the given educational settings, curricula, practices, thoughts and interactions (Simons, 2009). In this context, the observation of my students' responses and behaviours was integral to the purpose, the design, the process and the reflection of my study in terms of providing me with a more "holistic perspective" (Patton, 2002, p.262) of the case(s) and the settings in question and by extension, necessary for helping me gain a better understanding of the relationship of drama and the types of critical thinking that children could develop.

Observation also enabled me to see beyond the children's spoken language and actions and to gain insight into ideas that the children may have been

reluctant to talk about in an interview, as other factors (e.g. their classmates' presence or their own limited language skills) inhibited them (Robson, 2002, p.310). As Denscombe (2007) underlines, to rely on what participants state about their beliefs and feelings without also "*draw[ing] on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events first hand*" (p.206), and to observe how they behave and what they do is to ignore the complex relationship between behaviour and attitudes (*ibid*, p.597). For this reason, the different units of data which emerged from verbal or non-verbal responses, such as social interactions, facial expressions, posture and gestures allowed me to explore the children's opinions, attitudes and modes of behaviour, which I sometimes found to be contradictory to the description of their teachers (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.117).

Considering that data collection would benefit immensely from engaging a teacher-researcher in the setting, the method of **participant observation** was adopted, meaning participation in the daily life of the classroom observing things and questioning people (Denscombe, 2007, p.217). This method was considered invaluable, as new perspectives arose after discussing my findings, and the necessity of approaching things from a different angle was acknowledged. As Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) underline, "*[...] getting involved in some way in the setting you intend to research rather than standing on the sidelines can be an appealing prospect for any researcher*" (p.120).

The participatory aspects of this method afforded me thus the chance to "*gather 'live' data from 'live' situations*" (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p.305), an invaluable opportunity in terms of "*experiencing*" (O'Toole 2006, p.101) the settings and

looking at the various compound scopes of real-world situations from the inside (*ibid*). The dimension of participation also functioned as an advantage that allowed me to be part of a meaningful interaction with the children and to better appreciate and examine data collected (Gallagher, 2000, p.15). This is said to be particularly beneficial in drama education research; as Gallagher (2000) states,

“[...] given the nature of drama and the kinds of personal discoveries students often make, familiarity with the teacher [-researcher] can make it easier for students to describe their experiences and feelings” (ibid, p.16).

Participant observation is viewed as a natural stance for the teachers who are interested in gaining an understanding of the social realities of their classes, while, observations, interactions and understandings become a matter of “*perspective*” (Wolcott, 1990, p.133) and of “*rigorous subjectivity*” (*ibid*) that strengthens qualitative approaches as opposed to objective hypothesis testing that may be neither possible nor desirable (*ibid*). This line of arguments emancipates researchers from any positivistic misapprehension towards an objective approach and interpretation of reality, while it underlines that observation will always be partial and positioned (Gallagher, 2006). Participant observation afforded me the opportunity to fully engage in the process and record it first-hand (Denzin, 1978, p.183). I was able to trust my own judgement and to vary the degree of my participation according to my research needs. Here it is important to note that the contribution of the critical friends invited to participate in the fieldwork, to observe and reflect on data was very valuable (*ibid*).

The observations were also **semi-structured**, since I was open to new reactions and was not only looking for pre-determined points, as this would hinder my efforts to be reflective. As Cohen *et al.*, (2007) mention, the semi-structured observations “*have an agenda of issues but will gather data to illuminate these issues in a far less pre-determined or systematic manner*” (p.305). In this context, the observations were based firstly on certain aims and activities delivered through particular schemes of work, and secondly on the children’s responses. The children’s narratives and behaviours (facial expressions, body movements and attitudes) were socially situated, observed and interpreted in order to explore the connection between their learning, critical thinking and the social world. As I was interested in the process rather than simple outcomes and following Cohen *et al.*’s (2007) suggestion, the observation focused on the children’s and teacher’s discourses, placing emphasis on how autonomous children were when thinking about certain issues, what kind of language they used to express themselves, what the contribution of myself as the teacher was and how the interaction and exchange of ideas led them to develop their understanding (*ibid*, p.450-1; 513). I also looked for evidence of any effort made by the children to develop or cultivate different aspects of critical thinking or of difficulties with regards to these areas.

In all three schools, I also observed and interacted with students in the contexts of other various “*natural, ordinary situations*” (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995, p.119), such as lunchtime, breaks and other lessons conducted by the class teachers or other teachers in the schools prior (a week before) and during the fieldwork period (two days a week). These observations were unstructured, with

my notes focusing on the content of the lessons and the pedagogies employed, the way children were responding to those lessons and to their teachers' approaches respectively and the way in which they were behaving and interacting within freer contexts. The particular observations played a major role in the design of my research, even though I was not systematic in my observations in terms of completing particular observational schedules or focusing on certain behaviours; instead, the general data gathered helped me decide which themes were of interest and of significance to study (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.397). In the section of the discussion that follows, I will only refer to the semi-structured observations of the children in the drama sessions, which I consider to be my primary focus.

The semi-structured observations were recorded using the **descriptive approach**, according to which the observation is based on the description of people, settings and events that take place, and was recorded in notes (Robson, 2002, p.320). The flexibility of this method was useful because it provided me with the opportunity to "*consider the context of the behaviours, their sequences, their meanings*" (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p.45), the reactions and the responses of the children (*ibid*). Taking into account that the more descriptive an observation is, the more qualitative data it seeks (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.306), I determined to record observations as factually and objectively as possible, by using the pre-determined key points in combination with the field notes taken

a) during the workshops by my critical friends and

b) after the drama workshops by me, as I will explain in the sections that follow.

Apart from direct observation in context and real time, the observation was also held indirectly, with the use of video recordings, obtained with the permission of the class teachers, the children and the parents. This method, vital to the approach and interpretation of drama education due to its potential to capture the temporality of the various events and thus, its performative nature (Patterson *et al.*, 2003), was viewed as “*an effort to reflect the holistic view of the setting*” (Opie, 2004, p.123-124) and was useful for supplementing my participant observations with an accurate account of what was happening. My dual role as a participant observer but also a teacher was quite challenging; one of my concerns was finding ways in which I could to cope with the participants’ responses — which eventually led me to videotape the sessions. Most importantly, this helped me record the exact actions and words of participants (Patterson *et al.*, 2003; Koshy, 2005; Yin, 2011), which enabled me to review and re-interpret details of the data gathered and to analyse different aspects of the fieldwork, such as non-verbal responses to the various activities or even, to my presence as a drama teacher.

4.6.2.1. Limitations of Observations

Notwithstanding the above arguments in favour of observation, there are various limitations affecting the data collection that need to be considered. As Simpson and Tuson (2003) highlight, data and information gathered can easily be influenced by the researchers’ bias, focusing only on certain responses and

attitudes or encoding data subjectively (p.18); this occurs, as what is observed by the observers-researchers depends greatly on how they understand their world and their place in it (Somekh, 2004, p.138). From this perspective, and considering the complexity of human behaviour in terms of observing, acting or responding within particular settings (*ibid*), it can be claimed that, “*in effect, objective truth about a society or culture cannot be established because there are inevitably going to be conflicting versions of what happened*” (Angrosino, 2005, p.731). In this sense, the focus of observations and their recordings become, “*a product of choices about what to observe and what to record, made either at the time of the observation in response to impressions or in advance of the observation in an attempt prospectively to impose some order on the data*” (Jones & Somekh, 2004, p.138). It was vital to acknowledge this in order to ensure that the majority of key information would be collected and approached inter-subjectively; the children’s viewpoints, expressed either during the lessons or at their interviews, were considered in combination with the post-session discussions and exchange of notes and interpretations with the critical friends and the class teachers. In addition, I strove to ensure that the various units of data that emerged through observation were valid, reasonable data, and counted in the final analysis process only after reappearance and verification from other complementary methods of data gathering used for the purposes of this study, such as reflective journals.

Another limitation of observation includes the recurring question which researchers have long been preoccupied with: “*How do we know what the behaviour would be like if it hadn’t been observed?*” (Robson, 2002, p.311). The

present study, however, was not concerned with covertly discovering the behaviours of the normal classroom; instead, the focus was to work within the particularity of three units of analysis in a multiple case study. During the sessions I tried to be neither overly detached nor become so involved that I forgot or neglected my concerns as a researcher. In addition, to avoid disturbing the “*naturalness of the settings*” (Denscombe, 2007, p.217), the observation role was kept fairly covert: as far as the children were concerned, the emphasis was placed on making them feel secure enough to participate and respond to particular tasks rather than on the observation itself (*ibid*).

As noted earlier, some skeptics argue against participant observation, on the grounds that the researcher himself/herself might render the results of the observation questionable on account of their personal involvement or emotional engagement (Tedlock, 2000, p.465; Fielding, 2001, p.151; Mason, 2002, p.92). This phenomenon may distract the researchers from their focus while participants may present an ideal behaviour or tell the researchers what the latter would like to hear. It was to counteract the effects of this phenomenon that triangulation was adopted (Hammersley, 1991), as I will explain below. Far from overlooking the function of observation as an embodied method of researching, this study adopts a perspective that emphasises observation as a context for interaction with the participants and not as a research method per se (Angrosino, 2005, p.732).

Direct observation was a demanding task for me: the large number of participants in combination with time limitations often rendered note-taking extremely problematic. To tackle this challenge, I used sound and video

recordings and I invited two critical friends who would act as external observers; however, their attendance was not systematic, which meant that their contribution was fragmentary, and covered only those sessions which they observed. Because their involvement was partial, it was essential to update them on the re-informed aims, practices, and issues that arose up to a certain moment, so we could reflect on the overall data after each session. This made it mandatory that the use of direct observation be informed by the methods of indirect observation and my journal notes.

Indirect observation conducted through the use of a video recorder also posed some challenges; for instance, although it was allowed in the context of PC1 and PC2, it was initially restricted in PC3, because it was allegedly against the regulations of the school. After the third lesson, however, the head-teacher and the class teacher, having secured the parents' consent, suggested that I use the camera. To conclude, all PC1 and PC2 sessions were video-recorded whereas in PC3, the first three sessions were audio-recorded and the rest were video-recorded. Overall, various technical difficulties affected the quality of the recordings; lighting and sound levels were not always optimal (O'Toole 2006, p.105) owing to the distance between the camera and the participants. What is more, some activities such as group work, especially if held in open spaces such as that provided for the workshops with PC1, were impossible to capture on video: as I simultaneously coordinated the activities and gave feedback to the children, carrying the camera around with me would seriously disrupt the naturalness of the process (*ibid*). Regardless of these setbacks, the overall quality and quantity of the data collected

via the video recordings was satisfactory enough for me to carry out a thorough analysis of key aspects of the lessons.

4.6.3. Research Journals

Keeping a research journal is argued to be “*a type of connoisseurship by which individuals become connoisseurs of their own thinking and reflection patterns and indeed their own understanding of their work*” (Janesick, 1998, p.3) and “*a tangible way to evaluate our experience, improve and clarify our thinking, and finally become a better [...] scholar*” (*ibid*, p.24). Whether they are referred to as diaries, field notes or research journals, these narrative methods are important for understanding one’s professional activity and gaining insights not available from any other source. Blaxter *et al.* (1996) argue in favour of research journals suggesting that the research journal, particularly at critical junctures in research, allows an analysis of how researchers had come to be the ones they are at a particular time and “*just how far [they] have progressed*” (*ibid*, p.49). Essentially, field notes serve as an “*external memory for researchers to note from concrete actions to deep feelings and thoughts*” (Altrichter, 2005, p.24) and subsequently, as a reflection on the data gathered and a process of making connections and generating new perceptions (Holly *et al.*, 2005, p.28).

The research journal was chosen for this study as one of the basic research methods for gathering data primarily due to its familiarity as a methodical instrument, its flexibility to complement the data collected through direct and

indirect observations, and its accessibility. According to Altrichter *et al.* (2000), “writing a diary is simpler and more familiar than any other research methods, such as interviewing” (p.10), and it is always up to the researcher to use it when and where deemed necessary and in their preferred format and style. Central to the process of research is also the manner in which research journals allow researchers to distance themselves and gain a fresh perspective on the experiences and events. In this way, they can better understand the role of reflexivity in qualitative research based on the premise that keeping notes and writing down decisions and thoughts can document changes in thinking and can function as a catalyst for a conversation that leads to “*epistemological awareness*” (Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009, p.300), as diary writers become conscious of how their own knowledge is created (*ibid*).

Used from the planning phase to the final levels of data analysis as a record of my research experiences, the research journal served as a “*a great pulp memory bank*” (Holly, 1989, p.6) that revealed both the successful and unsuccessful routes of research so that I could revisit, reflect on and subject them to scrutiny (Altrichter *et al.*, 1993, p.12). Due to the multiplicity of the research material which is recorded in it, the research journal was also an instrument for qualitative inquiry that enclosed various sets of data. For instance, it included contextual information about the ways in which data was collected and structured; unstructured notes obtained by observations and informal discussions and interviews in the field, sometimes enriched by explanatory comments. Reflections involved writing analytically about: the research process; my role as a researcher;

the strengths and weaknesses of each method and stage; viewpoints for possible subsequent plans and actions; my insights and personal thoughts on the research aims, observations; responses to actions and events linked with pieces of reflection, analysis, and interpretation of research matters (Altrichter, 2005, p.24; Altrichter *et al.*, 2000, p.12).

The journal was organised chronologically (according to the dates of the events) and contextually (including information such as participants, location and time) and each entry comprised a descriptive account that was accompanied by an interpretation of the described action or affair. The descriptive entries were recorded immediately after the drama sessions and were informed by phrases and key words related to particular courses of the activity, discussions with the class teachers and the critical friends that followed, as well as notes taken by the latter during the sessions (Altrichter *et al.*, 2000, p.19). Lastly, as the sessions were multifaceted and complex, I often had to return to the journal and add information retrospectively (*ibid*).

The journal provided an account of experiences and ideas which, when returned to, often provided further insights and guided subsequent action taken for the following sessions. Gradually, the research diary transformed into a database of past ideas and events from which precise information about earlier stages, plans, achievements, occurring and recurring events could be retrieved at a later date, which on the one hand facilitated the evaluation progress and, on the other, reviewed possible reasons for the lack of progress. As Altrichter *et al.* (2000) point out,

“[...] [o]n rereading, it is much easier to judge which things are important, and which are not so important, than it is at the time of writing. You may also discover new relationships between ideas, and often some new insights, which should be followed up. Open questions emerge and it is easy to see how the thoughts expressed in the text could be usefully restructured” (p.21).

The detailed record of actions, responses and experiences captured in the research journal constituted a significant form of data, which I elaborate on in my thesis to convey my professional growth as well as how certain decisions were made, various events perceived, particular problems overcome, and perspectives changed. Data itself did not provide that potential; rather, its description, interpretation and reflection on it contributed to that end. Initial interpretations were interlinked with key theoretical concepts underpinning this study and more importantly, with the research questions and other methodological issues related to the appropriateness of the chosen methods and approaches and on how satisfactory the results were.

4.6.4. Interviews

An interview is defined as a *“conversation with a purpose”* (Burges, 1984, p.102), or, more specifically; as *“a prepared opportunity to elicit the views of the interviewee and the explanations of why these views about the topic are held”* (Macintyre, 2000, p.86). Data produced from interviews can be viewed as

socially constructed knowledge created and formed by human interaction, as interviewees are given the chance to discuss their interpretation of the world they live in and express their own point of view (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.267).

Following Wellington's (1996) statement that interviews are essential for "*clarifying concepts and suggesting theoretical perspectives*" (p.37), and that they enable researchers "*to clarify meanings, examine concepts or discover areas of ambiguity*" (*ibid*, p.36), I conducted 80-minute interviews with particular groups of people (see Table.1 illustrating the timeline of data collection in the three primary school classes in the Research Methods subchapter) which served as a form of constructive feedback. These enabled me to gather "*in-depth*" data that I could not collect using other methods such as observation and to see through different lenses the particular impact of the approaches and conventions applied for the purposes of enhancing the students' critical thinking. The interviews also clarified any ambiguities, and informed my way of thinking when trying to interpret the participants' experiences (Seidman, 2006, p.10).

The interviewees were either **class teachers** or **children-participants**:

a) Class teachers: They were interviewed before the sessions with the objective of identifying their perception about critical thinking and its place in the educational system of Cyprus, their personal way of enhancing their students' critical thinking, the role of drama in their classes, their attitudes towards the role of drama in the children's critical thinking enhancement and their students' participation and existing levels of critical thinking. The teachers were

interviewed again upon completion of the workshops in order to ascertain their views towards the potential enhancement of critical thinking through drama.

Interviews with the **class teachers** yielded compelling data about the academic, family and socioeconomic background of the students as well as the teachers' own knowledge as professionals, as it has been influenced by their qualifications and their practices; it also revealed interesting information relevant to the context of my research, which was enriched by their observations (when this was convenient) of my sessions. The teachers' comments on their students' ways of learning and responses informed the design of the activities, the collection and triangulation of data and the follow-up of any unexpected observations (Kerlinger, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.268). Taking into account that the background of the teachers provided them with no experience of the Performing Arts, their views, as presented in the analysis chapter that follows, informed my critique of the place of drama and Performing Arts in Primary Education in Cyprus.

b) Children-Participants: They were interviewed in groups consisting of 6-7 children in order to explore in depth any evidence of Critical Thinking enhancement as well as their attitudes towards learning after experiencing the drama workshops. In particular, I held three sets of interviews per class: two during the project, and one after the final workshop. While the latter was intended for everyone, not all the children participated in the former two sets of interviews. They were intended for children whose responses to particular dramatic activities were more interesting or required clarification or justification.

The children's interviews took place in different places and times according to the availability of the school premises (i.e. empty rooms/classrooms) and in agreement with the class teachers. Apart from the last two interviews that took place in an empty storage space, most of the interviews with PC1 took place in their own classroom during the last school period, which is the time when children can ask questions, request clarification of the lessons or get help with their homework. The interviews with PC2 and PC3 took place either in their own classroom or in other available classrooms, following an understanding with the class teachers.

As a research tool, these interviews proved invaluable in providing insight into the ways in which children experienced the drama workshops and the meaning they had constructed with regards to the content of the sessions and their participation itself. Based on the premise that "*[t]he best people to provide information in the child's perspective, actions and attitudes are children themselves*" (Scott, 2008, p.88), the interviews were an essential medium used to decode their experiences, their responses towards particular themes and their general participation in drama compared to other school practices (O'Toole, 2006, p.114; Seidman, 2006, p.10).

The option of group interviews was preferred, as they saved time and reflected most of the children's attitudes and perceptions (Hitchcock & Huges 1995, p.161). As Barbour and Schostak (2005) argue, the propinquity of group interviews to everyday life situations "*where people discuss, formulate and modify their views and make sense of their experiences as in peer groups*" (p.43) enables

interviewees to be authentic and spontaneous. I conducted group interviews to provide children with the opportunity to talk about issues and express themselves more freely than they would in a more formal interview (*ibid*). What is more, group interviews have the potential to make children feel more comfortable, “*safer, more secure and at ease when they are with their peers*” (Wellington, 1996, p.30). Group interviews also allow them to listen to their peers and stimulate the ideas of others, and, by extension, bring ideas to light that may have not have emerged otherwise (Taber, 2007, p.156). This was of particular interest due to the thematic context of my research and the ways in which children could think critically upon various issues; it was also significant because of the similarities with the applied concepts of critical pedagogy and the pedagogy of the ensemble that place the emphasis on the dynamic of the group and not on the adult’s (interviewer’s) dominance. The fact that my groups had a multidimensional character (different gender, class, race and background) functioned to the benefit of my aim to collect varied data as it emerged from the combination of “*different dilemmas*” (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p.205) and “*divergent opinions*” (*ibid*).

In their totality, the interviews conducted were **semi-structured**, with predetermined questions, but some additional questions were included when deemed necessary (Robson, 2002, p.103-104). The semi-structured type of interview was selected for its flexibility in terms of revising, adding to or skipping the pre-determined questions, as well as for allowing different amounts of time and attention for different topics (Robson, 2002, p.270-271). On the other hand,

according to Bogdan and Biklen (1997), the flexibility of a semi-structured interview does not provide the opportunity “*to understand how the subjects themselves structure the topic at hand*” (p.95). To face this challenge, I posed additional open-ended questions in order to explore in depth the subjects’ experiences and to clarify any misunderstandings (Robson, 2002, p.276) that could occur through activities in which they had to think critically, question themselves, ponder, make decisions, solve problems and come up with alternatives.

The semi-structured type of interview enabled both the children and class teachers to elaborate on themes they were interested in, to explore the “*unexpected insight*” (O’Toole, 2006, p.115) of their experiences and to extend them to the broader contexts of the educational system in Cyprus. The structural features of these interviews aimed for openness and flexibility and were intended to allow a conversational and a two-way communication that left room for a friendlier communication to be achieved (Hobson & Townsend, 2010, p.231). This was especially the case for the teachers who seized the opportunity to pose questions, share concerns and discuss problematic issues related to the Arts and education in Cyprus and to reflect on their students’ particularities and background, hence, providing me with honest and credible data (*ibid*) that enabled me to see what lay behind the children’s behaviours and responses.

All interviews were sound recorded and later transcribed.

4.6.4.1. Limitations of the Interviews

Besides the advantages of the interview, their employment in my research fieldwork conveyed various limitations and challenges, such as time and place availability (Robson, 2002, p.273). To set up interviews with the class teachers was easy because it presupposed the willingness and availability of distinct individuals; for the interviews with the children during and at the end of the workshops, however, it was vital to find a suitable room while not wasting learning time. The challenges faced while conducting the interviews with the children from PC1 stemmed from the fact that the interviews took place in the classroom during the last school period, when they were doing revision tests, working on homework or asking their teacher for clarifications. Although we were sitting at the back of the classroom for the purposes of not interrupting or being interrupted by others (to the extent possible), the discussion process could not be carried out smoothly. Within the next sessions, and following a discussion with the class teacher who modified the type of activities she was giving to the children to work upon while I was interviewing their classmates, the framework of the interviews was significantly improved.

A further issue that surfaced during the group interviews with the children was the synthesis of the group to be interviewed, in terms of the type of relationship that existed among the participants and the possible presence of particular individuals who might “contaminate” (Taber, 2007, p.157) the collected data. This was evident in the interview with the children from PC1 and PC3, albeit in a different way; the children were randomly placed in groups, yet the

dominant personalities of the groups (PC1) tended to monopolise the discussion, thus threatening others with their presence and consciously or subconsciously, not letting them contribute (Wellington, 1996, p.30).

Conversely, in the case of PC3, some children encouraged their peers or best friends to support their arguments. Since this was evident in the very first interview, I was careful when sorting out the groups for subsequent interviews based on their personalities and relationships, while I encouraged all the children to express themselves. To do this, firstly I used phrases such as: “‘A’, *what do you think about ...?*”; “‘A’, *do you agree or disagree with your classmates/friend’s view and why?*”; “‘A’, *I would very much like to hear your opinion on ...*”. Secondly, I employed alternative methods: when for example, I asked the children from PC2 to think whether the drama plot reminded them of a story or a real event, I asked all of them to write the title of the event or a sentence about the real story and then take turns to share it with the others. This ensured that all the children participated and provided a platform for further discussion based on the children’s experiences and background knowledge.

Kellet and Ding (2004) highlight that some children might “*say what the interviewer wants them to say*” (p.165) for various reasons, such as to please him/her, and thus the validity of the responses is questionable. Bearing in mind the risk of the researcher’s bias leading the interview, the adoption of a semi-structured style of questions was useful in ensuring that the children’s responses were not being led and were as truthful as possible, as the following example of post-workshop questions posed to the children illustrates.

❖ **Examples:**

-“*Why do you think I invited you to participate in activities within this story framework?*”

-“*Can you relate to the characters or the content of the story?*”

-“*Are there any activities in which you found it easier to express your ideas? If yes, which activities?*”

4.6.5. The Critical Friends’ Involvement

For the purposes of ensuring multi-perspectivity and validity, I considered it essential to invite two critical friends to get involved in the process of the research as direct observers. Due to the fact that I was involved as a practitioner-researcher in this study, I attempted to avoid one-dimensional approaches to the particularities of the contexts and the interpretations of the data collected (Foulger, 2010, p.140) and to open up “*opportunities for connections to be made and innovations to be explored*” (*ibid*, p.138). These people, personal friends of mine and holders of education-related university degrees (Bachelor’s Degree in the field of Education, Master’s Degree in Education and Educational Psychology), were selected based on their willingness, availability and academic background (Gallagher, 2000, p.97). Even though they did not have any drama experience, our discussions could be held within risk-free forums to test ideas about emerging themes (Spall, 1998).

The critical friends were informed, prior to the fieldwork, about the aims of the study, its research questions objectives and theoretical origins. During the fieldwork, my critical friends were provided with the codes and their indicators, while they were also invited to be open observers and to make comments and suggestions with regards to the pre-existing codes and the codes that emerged along the way. The critical friends attended most of the sessions and, during brief conversations after the completion of the sessions, they provided me with observations, reflective thoughts and interpretations, while explaining the reasoning behind them. In addition, at the end of the project, when I had transcribed my data, we had further discussions, reflecting on what we had observed during the workshops and what this might indicate.

4.6.6. Drama Conventions Informed by Role-Play

Role-play is often defined as a “*spontaneous, dramatic, creative teaching strategy in which individuals overtly and consciously assume the roles of others*” (Sellers, 2002, p.498). However, its use and approach is not limited to its function as a dramatic convention; rather, it is also arguably a reasonable research technique adopted to generate “subtle and indirect forms of data collection” (O’Toole, 2006, p.110). Its use in well-structured research processes allows the development of valued learning practices and of reciprocal relationships between the participants, which may ultimately affirm the quality, the truth and the general validity of data retrieved. Participants are placed at the centre of the research

process and are allowed to respond freely and openly while constructing their own understandings about the world without being oppressed by the researcher's instructions and restrictions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.519). This is linked with Bolton and Heathcote's (1999) argument, that "*role-players are not just receiving or acquiring knowledge as in a typical instructional context; they are making it, practising it and embodying it: they know what they know*" (p.57-58).

Role-play has been applied extensively in the various contexts designed and implemented for the purposes of this study as a research tool, either in its devising form or in the form of alternative conventions such as *Mantle of the Expert*, *Teacher in Role*, *Hot Seating*, *Forum Theatre*, *Carousel of Performances*, *Flashback* and, *Writing in Role*. The use of role-play or of related drama conventions as research tools enabled the participants of this study to become "*active subjects rather than objects*" (Alldred 1998, cited in Boylan and Dalrymple 2009, p.72); through these conventions, the children in role (as other citizens in PC1; detectives in PC2; and as "wise ones" in PC3) were encouraged to take a critical stance, think openly and fairly towards the issues under discussion and the characters of the stories, make decisions and solve problems (by recalling, analysing, synthesising and evaluating) using the information gained from the context itself or from such techniques.

This was an indirect way of gathering data through their responses as to how critical thinking could be framed by drama conventions as shaped by my drama pedagogy, the way the children responded to the process and the reason behind this, how this fieldwork responded or was adapted to their previous

experiences, what kind of elements related to critical thinking their responses might reveal and whether there was evidence that some of them think more critically when they are emotionally engaged. Therefore, the main reason for considering the use of role-play and other related drama conventions in this research is because of the potential they provide to participants to represent and explore different people's perspectives and by extension, to cultivate different types of knowledge and elements of critical thinking (in role or out of role, respectively). This can add another dimension to this research in that *"participants are engaged in reflexive praxis; they are learning and doing at the same time, i.e. research as a combination of experience and reasoning"* (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.519).

Like other methods of collecting empirical qualitative data, role-playing would not provide me with unbiased, objective documentation; however, I chose to use it for its potential to reveal aspects of the participants' responses that could be missed by other research methods (*ibid*). In order to ensure that research data would be reliable and transparent and that the activities applied would be clear and meaningful, I adopted O'Toole and Haseman's (1992) suggestion to decide in advance *"the purpose of taking on role [;] the status or level of power of the role-high, low or equal status in relation to the others in the role-play; the attitude of the role; and the participants' motivation in the role-play"* (p.7-8). The way these ideas and conventions were explored is presented in detail in the analysis chapter that follows.

4.6.7. Triangulation and the Issue of Validity

The concept of validity in educational research is seen as intertwined with the processes of clarifying, planning, implementing and reviewing in relation to research and educational praxis (Seale; 1999; Scott & Morrison, 2006, p.252). Kvale (1995) ascribes **validity** the features of **investigator** or **craftsman** in terms of constantly exploring, checking and questioning and challenging the interpretation of data; he defines the **communicator** as that person who endorses knowledge through dialogue; finally, he explores **action** in terms of attaining the correct inferences from the study results. Considering the vulnerability of my data to the limitations that the above-mentioned chosen research methodologies and methods entailed, triangulation was chosen as a way to maximise its validity.

Triangulation is a process of scrutinising perspectives from various angles while actively seeking out alternative ones (Winston, 2006, p.46) in order to generate and to strengthen evidence by supporting important arguments: *“evidence – whether convergent, inconsistent or contradictory – such that the researcher can construct good explanations of the social phenomena from which they arise”* (Mathison, 1988, p.15). Triangulation also serves as a medium to eliminate bias or discrepancies deriving from the employment of any methodology or research method (Simons, 2009, p.129). The idea of triangulation is argued to derive from measurement practices in social, educational and behavioural research (Webb *et al.*, 1966, p.3) according to which, *“[o]nce a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced”* (*ibid*).

Throughout the bibliography of social and educational research, there are many different approaches to triangulation articulated by various proponents, which often view triangulation as an intertwined method of the concept of validity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It is worth mentioning that in the framework of this fieldwork, triangulation was employed to boost its validity; however, it was not considered nor used as a method that “*assumes a single fixed reality that can be known objectively through the use of multiple methods*” (Seale, 1999, p.53). Rather, the aim was to gain open, deeper, complex and multiple readings and understandings of the fieldwork (*ibid*, p.58-60). To this end, I made use of different types of triangulation as follows:

- a) **Data triangulation:** This involved the collection of data through various sampling strategies with the aim of examining whether specific data collected at specific times and contexts can be generalised (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.183). Particular themes which derived from the research questions, such as the impact of drama pedagogy on the enhancement of critical thinking, were examined as the fieldwork progressed.
- b) **Investigator triangulation:** This refers to the use of more than one observer in the field to gather and interpret data and it was adopted to eliminate any bias generated by a single individual (Denzin, 1978, p.297). In this case, the support and feedback of my supervisor who reviewed my research design and drama schemes prior to each session and offered critical comments throughout the process played a major role. Additionally, the constructive criticism by the

critical friends and the class teachers, with whom I had regular reflective discussions about content of the sessions, and the children's responses were invaluable to the limitation of any degree of subjectivity that could contaminate the research process and interpretation of findings (*ibid*).

c) **Theoretical triangulation:** This was achieved through the use of more than one theoretical position so as to utilise different perspectives while interpreting data. Investigator triangulation has been said to enhance theoretical triangulation insofar as different researchers adopt several ways of approaching and interpreting situations due to their diverse theoretical backgrounds and disciplines (Stake, 1995, p.113). To triangulate the information and to ensure validity, I shared and cross-checked views on the observations and the transcripts with my critical friends, my supervisor and, when this was convenient, with the class teachers (*ibid*).

d) **Methodological triangulation:** This involved the use of multiple qualitative methods (Denzin, 1978, p.301), namely observation, research journals, interviews, and drama conventions to gather data related to the themes that each class touched upon. Although my data was primarily drawn from the observations, my analysis was still informed by data from other sources to help eliminate bias and to provide better in-depth understanding (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.121). Essentially, units of data gathered from observations enabled me to notice and frame the children's responses as well as their nonverbal clues as communicated in their oral participation (Simons,

2009, p.61) and in various drama contexts and conventions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.252). This data was further examined through the reviewing of video recordings, the critical friends' and teachers' comments and, mainly, through the children's responses, perceptions and understandings as articulated in the interviews (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.121).

4.6.8. Ethical Considerations

In his Dictionary of Sociology, Marshall (1998) defines “*research ethics*” (p.556) as “[t]he application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to the collection, analysis, reporting, and publication of information about research subjects, in particular active acceptance of subjects’ right to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent” (*ibid*). Ethics do, in essence, represent rules for making decisions about desirable and undesirable values to be adopted or avoided and actions to be achieved based on a rational understanding of what Sauer calls the “*common good*” (Sauer, 1997, p.1184).

Thus, individual or research ethics can be better understood once they are juxtaposed with the society within which they are performed. It might be argued that in order to conduct an ethical research, one should treat the participants as important and unique human beings within the context of a just and equitable society (May, 2001, p.56; O'Toole, 2006, p.77) and not as a “*source of data for analysis*” (O'Toole, 2006, p.77). To paraphrase Evans and Jakupiec's (1996) argument, the validity of a research depends on its moral principle of respect of the

people involved. It is not ethically tolerable to abuse the participants' personality, self-purpose or self-determination (*ibid*, p.73). This ethical expectancy becomes particularly urgent for the educational research, which engages and invites "*people to take part in, or undergo, procedures that they have not actively sought out or requested*" (Guilemin & Gillam, 2004, p.271).

Researchers in education need to be aware of the principles and the guidelines of legitimacy and thus, be responsible and accountable for the design and the methods they use, because they are the ones who are the main determinants of the ethical standards of their studies (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Simons (2009, p.98) explains the important role of ethics as principles and rules that define the relationship between the researcher and the participants, while she claims that this relationship should be characterised by a sense of trust and respect towards the latter's dignity and integrity.

In an alternative line of argument, Pring (2001) suggests that instead of equating ethics with rules, principles or codes, it is of paramount importance to consider the impact of the researcher's virtues, which he calls the "*general dispositions to do the right thing at the right time*" (p.150), because researchers "[require] very special sorts of virtue, both moral and intellectual" (*ibid*, p.151), therefore, their ethical practice depends "*on the sort of people they are*" (Pring, 2003, p.63). Pring (2001) explains that these sorts of virtues entail "*the disposition to search for the truth*", "*impartiality*", "*openness to criticism and co-operation*", "*resistance to the blandishments or attractions which tempt one*", "*courage*", "*honesty*", "*concern for the well-being of those who are being researched*",

“modesty”, “humility”, “trust”, and the “ability to keep promises” (*ibid*, p.151-152).

Some important ethical considerations made prior to the commencing of this project were the acquisition of access to the three primary schools in which the project was eventually conducted, and the acceptance by those people whose permission was needed (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.51). Access to the schools was first granted by the Ministry of Education in Cyprus to which I submitted an application form detailing the features of my research (the conceptual and procedural frameworks of this inquiry; the rationale of the study; the research methods; the place; the duration; the participants; a brief description of the aims and the activities designed for the project and potential risks of the research) (*ibid*). Once permission by the Ministry was granted, I requested permission from the head-teachers and the class teachers, with whom I met to present my project. Finally, I sought the approval of the parents or legal guardians of the children-participants by means of a written form. In the form I explained that the project was part of my doctoral degree and that its findings were subject to publication; moreover, I stated that a number of participant observations prior and during the research, as well as video and audio recordings and interviews were required. An Ethical Approval form was also obtained by the University of Warwick after my upgrade exam in November 2011.

Informed consents not only concerned the legal guardians, school authorities and parents, but also all the children who would participate in the research with respect to their rights to self-determination, freedom and

vulnerability (Piper & Simons, 2005, p.56; Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.52). In my case, because of the age of the participants (9 years old), I chose to orally inform the children of the nature of my project as well as what was expected of them. Although the information I provided the children with was clear, it was briefer compared to the in-depth, comprehensive analysis I presented their parents and teachers with; at the same time, I placed emphasis on the fact that we were going to do some drama workshops as an alternative way of learning. This was compliant with Stenhouse's (1988) statement that "*the urge towards more covert strategies comes from those who fear that the respondents of subjects who understand the research in which they are involved will be influenced by this knowledge*" (p.217), while the head-teachers and the class teachers agreed that this approach could improve data validity. It is worth mentioning that when I sought the children's consent, I clarified to them that they should not feel obliged to participate and that they could withdraw from the study at any time (BERA, 2004). As a researcher, I was aware that this is not very applicable in practice due to the potential capture in the class group (Babbie, 2004). However, just four participants stated at the beginning that they were not sure whether they would like to participate, because drama was something new to them. I encouraged them to observe the sessions and participate whenever and if they felt like doing so; it only took a few minutes of the first session to convince them. Overall, all children were willing to participate (BERA, 2004).

Another basic principle adopted in this project was the children's right of "*privacy*", a right that refers to "*controlling other people's access to information*

about a person” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.118), which entails the notions of the sensitivity of information. This concerns the degree to which the data collected is personal, the degree of privacy of the setting where research unfolds and the dissemination of information, in other words, the potential to identify the participants based on the information they offered (Crandall & Diener, 1978, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 61). To safeguard the right of privacy, I use anonymity within which “*the identity of the participants is not known*” (*ibid*) and the data is kept confidential (*ibid*); also, pseudonyms were used for children and their teachers in the data analysis (observations, written activities, interviews) instead of names (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p.49). The only real names used are those of my critical friends, who granted me the permission to do so (*ibid*).

All the observations and interviews were conducted in public settings while I assured the participants that the findings of the study would remain confidential, in the sense that the connections between the data provided and their identities would not be publicised (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p.119). While interacting with the children, I was careful not to pose questions that might make them feel uncomfortable or harm them in any way prior, during or after the workshops by unveiling information that would embarrass them or jeopardise sensitive data such as their personality, background, origins and relationships (Babbie, 2004). Likewise, when designing and carrying out the interviews, care was taken not to make the children feel in any way uncomfortable, through questions that might have negative or unpleasant connotations or put them on the spot, while avoiding bias and securing the right of refusal at any stage to respond

to particular items in the interviews (see appendix 5 for an example of this). As far as the interactions with the children are concerned, I sought to speak to their teachers about them prior and during the sessions in order to treat each of them appropriately in the classroom, while taking their individual personalities into consideration (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p.258). The consideration of above-noted ethical issues was important to the validity and reliability of the data (BERA guidelines, 2004).

4.6.9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.6.9.1. Content Analysis

The data derived from this project was analysed using the method of content analysis. It is “*essentially a coding operation*” (Babbie, 2004, p.309), with coding being “*the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form*” (*ibid*) and can be defined as “*the study of recorded human communications*” (*ibid*, p.304) found in spoken words or dialogues, texts, actions or video recordings (*ibid*). As Merriam (2009) comments, “*in one sense, all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analysed*” (*ibid*, p.205). Content analysis enjoys wide popularity in researcher circles due to a number of competitive advantages it features over other analysis techniques: not only does it offer the opportunity of revisiting it and replicating it at a later stage (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.475), but also it is an inconspicuous means of observation, (Krippendorp, 2004, p.40) which enables one

to observe without being observed (Robson, 2002, p.280). Conversely, content analysis comes with a set of disadvantages. Critics argue that as a technique, content analysis entails examining written texts, which are open to subjective interpretation (Krippendorp, 2004, p.22-24). This necessitates considering the context, objectives and discourses of data when analysing it (*ibid*).

In this qualitative study, the data collected is in the form of words, accurately transcribed from the observations, my own field notes and reflection journal, conversations, responses from open-ended questions posed within the context of drama activities including the children's written work and replies in the form of bodily movements or gestures. Following Miles and Huberman's (1994) argument, my data analysis involved converting all the records from my observations, field notes and reflection journal into "*write-ups*" (p.51) while transcribing all the conversations and interactions "*so [I could focus] on words as the basic medium and [could assume] that the words involved have been refined from raw notes or tape recordings into a text that is clear to the reader or analyst*" (*ibid*). During the course of this process, I re-visited the collected data several times, discussing with the class teachers and the critical friends, made comments and notes, established connections between data derived from different situations in order to develop multiple standpoints and identified constructs such as themes, incidence, patterns and trends (Macintyre, 2000, p.91). These constructs were necessary in order to identify the core messages that each unit of data entailed with regards to the ways in which the children made sense of the project in relation to

their realities, responded to its stimuli and made their own contributions showing in various senses the process of their thinking (*ibid*).

Eisenhardt (1989) argues that “[a]nalyzing data is the heart of building theory from case studies, but it is both the most difficult and the least codified part of the process” (p.539); as he explains, this is the reason for which a theory or theoretical framework first emerges through the inductive approach of studying an empirical case, not through a deductive process: “[t]he key point is that before a theory can be validated, it must be constructed” (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003, p.65). The coding process of the data gathered from this project was both inductive and deductive: firstly, the codes used to analyse the data consisted of “sensitizing concepts” (Patton, 2002, p.456) (i.e. habitus, citizenship, participation), whereby connections were made between my practice and the theoretical framework; secondly, the codes were also “indigenous” (*ibid*, p.457), used to create new codes (in this case I refer to behaviours related to the children’s contributions, that is taking a stance towards an issue, a person or a situation), which were integrated with the constructs of the project attesting a theory according to its “perfect fit” (Merriam, 2009, p.206).

In the first stage of the analysis process, all the data was organised, categorised and coded; “[c]odes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to ‘chunks’ of varying size — words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56). In this project, significant categories were identified and coded while some of them appeared to overlap with

the areas I intended to investigate through participant observation and drama conventions which I have discussed in 4.6.6. This process enabled me to move beyond the descriptive to an analytical level of understanding in order to explore in depth the presence or impact of any evidences in relation to the children's responses, which were equally considered and valued. As I found similar patterns, I chose to focus on the most relevant or powerful utterances and classify them under the most distinct categories and sub-categories, as discussed in Analysis Chapter. Since the children's responses varied (i.e., word expressions/bodily expressions/writing) and were collected in different contexts (i.e., in role or out of role), some of them were combined or compared or even cross-checked, when needed, in order to identify areas for examination and interpretation. At this point it should be mentioned that only part of the volume of transcribed data I had collected would eventually be used or referenced in the analysis section; in other words, the most suitable data related to the core of my research focus were selected.

4.6.9.2. Coping with Translation as a Core Element of Interpretation

Qualitative research searches for meanings in subjective experiences as constructed and formulated in language. Specifically, language is both the means whereby the response is expressed, but also a factor that influences the way meaning is formed in a particular context. However, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) warn, this is a rather challenging process as these meanings may be

difficult to express through language, due to the fact that narratives and metaphors used are language-specific and may well vary from culture to culture. Conversely, meaning may not be entirely comprehensible; as some linguists argue, the experience of social reality is unique to one's own language and people who speak different languages might have different understandings of that experience (Chapman, 2006).

Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that, for the purposes of ensuring validity in qualitative research, the meanings experienced by the participants and the meanings as communicated and interpreted (including translation) in the analysis of findings should be as similar as possible. The issues of interpreting, representing and understanding meanings are of paramount importance in qualitative research, especially when cultural contexts differ and interlingual translation is necessitated. If participants and the main researcher speak the same language, data gathering, transcription and first analyses are typically carried out effectively, as the first coding phase stays closely to the data. When interpretations take place on a multi-national level, they should be carried out in English and linguistic subtleties should be clarified to avoid miscommunication, which might compromise the validity of the study. It is essential to ensure that the message communicated in the source language be interpreted by the researchers and transferred into the target language in a clear way (*ibid*).

Taking into consideration the need to enhance the validity of the analysis, presentation and communication of my Greek-English data, I used van Nes *et al.*'s (2010) recommendations, as expressed in their article: "*Language differences in*

qualitative research: is meaning lost in translation?” To avoid potential limitations in the meaning and the analysis of data, I attempted to use the original language as long as possible by transcribing all the data collected through various sources in Greek, while coding and categorising it mainly according to the phrasal expressions and notes in Greek. Keeping a record of them was useful for making the interpretations transparent, which proved valuable when at a later phase I had to select some of them to translate and cite in this thesis.

After categorising and coding, I attempted to translate the participants' responses using firstly English for more fluid descriptions of meanings; at the same time, I checked the interpretations by going back to the codes and initial findings written in Greek. Here it is important to note that in the first draft of the analysis chapter, I translated the data on my own and had them edited by a professional translator-proofreader with whom I collaborated. This involved explaining to the proofreader the intended meaning and its context in Greek while proposing an English translation and discussing possible wordings with her. We exchanged ideas on alternative renderings in order to closely examine metaphors or potential subtle differences in meaning according to the context; and then we would decide together on the best translation to represent the intended meanings of the children, the class teachers, the critical friends and myself.

4.6.10. Summary

This chapter has presented a thorough explanation of how I implemented a multiple case study with three units of analysis informed by elements of ethnography and by the reflexive considerations of the ‘insider’ role of the reflective practitioner. It has also detailed the reasons this methodology (*Bricolage* in the interpretive tradition) was deemed as the most appropriate for my research, and has provided justification for the methods utilised in my fieldwork. These were: observations, a research journal, interviews and drama conventions — with emphasis on those related to role-play. I also explained how each of these methods and methodologies complemented each other through the process of triangulation. At the same time, I have stated the challenges and shortcomings I encountered during the data gathering process and the ways in which I attempted to overcome them. I have considered the ethical procedures taken into account in the planning and implementation of my fieldwork, the strategies used for its design, as well as the collection and coding of my data, accompanied by related timeline tables and summary statements. Finally, I have considered the problematic aspects of translation that impacted upon this thesis and have explained how I attempted to deal with them in order to address issues of validity.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

5.1. Introduction:

This chapter accommodates findings from the data collected during the research praxis in the three primary school classes and which appears to be relevant to my research focus: to investigate whether an artistic way within drama could enhance critical thinking in upper primary school students. In this context, I elaborate on the aspects of critical thinking my workshops put emphasis on and those revealed during my research, followed by evidence and theoretical underpinnings to corroborate the contribution of drama to these areas and to unveil issues that enabled or prohibited their development. At the same time, the interaction of drama practices with the contextual particularities of each case (Chapter III: Context of Research) is also examined *within their own contexts* (Aubusson & Schuck, 2008, p.34) and in relation to the emerging issues and the accompanying pedagogic practices – as well as the time at which they were implemented – that were applied within these contexts (*ibid*). This does not mean that the aforesaid approach aims to focus on each case per se, but rather that it is used to understand how the data informed the re-planning of the following lesson(s) and whether and in what ways the students' contexts encouraged or proscribed the cultivation of their critical thinking.

As the reader will gather from the analysis structure, this is done in a linear way with the aim of showing how various issues might lead to others and of

shedding light on different parameters of the fieldwork. Thus, descriptions and interpretations of data gathered from the three research classes are blended, apart from exceptional instances observed only at a specific research group. These descriptions and interpretations regard the contributions of children and the views offered from the class teachers, the critical friends and myself as a reflective practitioner, all combining and complementing each other. Since there is no space for details in every aspect of the learning experience throughout the workshops, this analysis is presented under subheadings that focus on or illuminate my key research questions.

More specifically, in the following subchapters I will first present the views submitted by the three primary school teachers in relation to critical thinking and drama in Cyprus in order to provide more information about the learning environment in which the participants of this study interacted and the ways I approached or used that information for the purposes of my project. Second, I will examine whether there is any evidence to show that, by inviting children to participate in these drama sessions they developed or, more realistically, moved towards the expression of any elements of critical thinking, as presented in the literature review of this thesis. To this end, I elaborate on my work with the three classes — from the first to the third class — starting from the base, namely the communities of inquiry. This was the main pedagogy applied here, and on it I built the rest of the analysis of different aspects of each class, or sometimes similar ones when this was convenient.

Here it is important to note that special emphasis is given to two drama strategies /conventions, namely the *Forum Theatre* and the *Mantle of the Expert*, which were used extensively in this project. These two strategies/conventions served as a springboard for others that actually emerged based on and inspired by them (either before or after other basic strategies were employed). This is the reason why the theoretical background underpinning these approaches is explained in more detail, as well as the ways in which these methods were used to promote critical thinking in children. A third issue this study will focus on is the incidences of gender and cultural stereotypes and the way these affected the participants' thinking and responses, as well as the way I reacted as a drama educator towards such challenges. Also, this work will discuss the children's participation in various frameworks in and out of role insofar as that participation helped identify elements of critical thinking, as recorded from our interactions in drama activities and their comments in the interviews; finally, the ways in which the context might impact the identification of instances of critical thinking are also discussed.

5.2. Critical Thinking and Drama in Cyprus Primary Education; the Views Submitted by the Three Primary School Teachers

The current Primary School Curriculum – introduced in Cyprus in 2010 – belongs to the category of the respective national curricula that foster the cultivation of critical thinking. In actual fact, however, critical thinking is but a mere term referred to in a teachers' handbook among other educational objectives,

rather than a concept that is actively promoted in the scholastic environment. Beyond the official statements, the Cypriot Primary School teachers I worked with stated that, each educator may interpret the term subjectively; what is more, albeit it appears in teaching handbooks, critical thinking was not explored in their undergraduate studies or later on in their teaching career, for instance in seminars run by The Pedagogical Institute, which renders it a fairly vague concept. This is what one of the teachers had to say on the subject:

“What we need is not a mere mention of the term, but a clear explanation, analysis and ideas we can use to actually make students think critically”
(third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012).

This is what the three teachers told me when I asked them what they think critical thinking entails:

First class teacher: *“The capability to vote for or against a specific idea... If I were to define the critical thinker, I would say that he or she might be one who does not act spontaneously; rather when he or she is called upon to make a decision, he or she employs logic, and calculates both the positive and negative aspects of the issue as well as their impact, before actually going through with a particular course of action”* (first class teacher interviewed on 23/01/2012).

Second class teacher: *“To think critically, one should make decisions based on certain criteria which will help establish whether something is right or wrong and act accordingly. In other words, the critical thinker should be able to ask “what”, “how” and “why” when investigating an issue or a situation and to apply reason with the aim of finding the best possible alternative or solution. To this end, it is useful to make connections with their personal experiences and thus make sense of it”* (second class teacher interviewed on 12/04/2012).

Third class teacher: *“It is the ability to filter the data one is presented with, by using logic and by tapping into their education and personal experiences so that they can consider a case in depth, draw conclusions and give their own interpretations. In other words, instead of accepting a piece of information or a fact passively, the critical thinker reflects on it by examining it from all angles”* (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012).

The teachers’ interpretations were evidently based on their own way of approaching the term in the context of their own pedagogy. Wright (2002) explains that it is the teachers’ readings or objective understanding of critical thinking that will determine what they teach and how they will teach it. There is, Wright (2002) argues, an abundance of materials and programs which supposedly foster thinking (i.e. higher order thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, etc.),

but teachers are unable to select and use them because they do not know how. He concludes that “[t]hey have not usually been exposed to the definitional conversation, and the scant evidence that exists would point to the fact that teachers and curriculum developers have quite different conceptions of critical thinking from those advanced” (ibid, p.4).

When it came to assessing the level of critical thinking in Cypriot Education and in particular, in primary stages, the teachers unanimously stated that this is an issue they repeatedly bring to the staff meetings, because the difficulty the majority of students have in expressing themselves is clearly evident. Some manifestations of this are their lack of linguistic confidence, their struggle to consider issues in depth and their inability to explain their point of view using “appropriate” vocabulary. Reflecting on the way the Cypriot educational system has been reformed, teachers reported that the cultivation of critical thinking in students is also hindered by three main obstacles: the evident lack of critical thinking activities in the Cypriot curriculum, the pressure on teachers to teach all the modules dictated by the curriculum with emphasis on the “core modules” and, by extension, the little room left for children to express their voices. These parameters essentially espouse the training syndrome of the “right answer” and the “high score achievement”. To this end, alternative ways of learning, including play, are minimised whereas the endorsement of memorisation and technical skills are given priority. These views are consistent with what Maxine Greene (1995) calls the concept of “seeing schooling small” (p.11), an idea which was bred in a competitive society:

“Seeing schooling small is pre-occupied with test scores, ‘time on task’, management procedures, ethnic and racial percentages and accountability measures, while it screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons” (ibid).

Along these lines, it seems that the pedagogical approach, encountered – at least – in these three schools, can be associated with Bernstein’s (1977) collection code, according to which the model of learning is limited to the transmission of knowledge *“that [has] little significance to conduct life”* (Aronowitz, 2009, p.106) rather than knowledge construction. As the teachers admitted, core modules are given priority; in case the aims related to literacy and mathematics are not met promptly, complementary or “second-class” modules, namely Art, Music and Physical Education, are put aside. Even though the addition of drama to the new curricula was highly celebrated by policy makers and a number of educators who were qualified in drama or generally promote the Arts, students rarely experience drama and theatre; when they do, as all three teachers stated in their first interviews, it is only through their participation in extra-curricular activities, in short plays related to national and religious celebrations or by watching plays subsidised by the Cypriot Ministry of Education.

One of the teachers noted:

“Sadly, we give priority to other modules and overlook the Arts and specifically, drama. Yes, we employ them, but this happens approximately

two to three times a year in each class, mainly in the context of the Christmas or end-of-school celebrations” (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012).

Besides, the consideration of drama as an important medium, although time consuming, in combination with the stress to meet the requirements for literacy and numeracy seemed to justify why two out of the three teachers asked me to do the fieldwork during the teaching hours of “complementary modules”. Only one teacher suggested that I should use some of the teaching hours allotted to the module of Greek language. This stance is indicative of the fact that, although most teachers claim to be proponents of a well-rounded education, in actual fact they are not. According to Sherman (2009), the “*lack of staying power*” (p.44) of such educational ideals seems to be caused by various aspects including both the political climate and the personal beliefs of teachers who have been educated in more conventional ways. To him, these people may have deeply held conservative views of teaching approaches, based on their own schooling experiences or on their university training, attitudes that are probably prolonged in the next generation in one way or another. Even if these people, who are now working as teachers or headmasters, are informed about new approaches, there is no guarantee as to whether, when and how they will adopt them. In this way, it is questionable whether these attitudes challenge the adoption of alternative approaches; especially when coupled with the all-time call for better results in test scores and standardisation; in essence, the pressures to achieve the Ministry standards conflict with the ideal of a more all-encompassing curriculum (*ibid*).

When designing and applying my drama workshops, I had in mind the data collected from the teachers' interviews prior to the fieldwork, as well as the social and attitudinal parameters that they themselves emphasised as typical of their students' behaviour, such as gender discrimination. Some of the following sections will explore what happened when I applied drama to enhance certain critical thinking skills and habits; I will also discuss the extent to which the above-mentioned parameters challenged the process of drama lessons and the ways in which I endeavoured to eliminate their negative impact.

5.3. Elements of Critical Thinking Promoted in this Fieldwork

With the aim of viewing and approaching critical thinking as the mental and emotional function through which the children could evaluate the reliability of information and decide what to think or what to do based on all available information, my fieldwork was based on activities and conventions applied to provide them with opportunities to cultivate skills and dispositions, as drawn from the Literature Review Chapter. These were necessary in order to:

- a) develop a critical stance** and make informed questions, learn how to think logically, decide when and what methods and strategies to use to deal with a situation
- b) analyse, synthesise, evaluate and compare information and issues**
- c) detect problems**

d) require evidence

e) discover and use the best explanation

f) enhance their self-awareness by balancing the effects of motivation and prejudice and by acknowledging their own assumptions or prejudices

g) improve their honesty by recognising emotional impulses, selfish motives, or other faults

h) have discipline; to be accurate, detailed, complete and exhaustive; to resist manipulation and irrational appeals and to avoid rash decisions

i) be open-minded, reflective and fair-minded: evaluate all reasonable conclusions, study the various possible views or perspectives, be open to alternative interpretations; be autonomous; approve of new priorities, consider the impact of a decision on citizenship; reassess evidence or reassess their real interests; approve of new explanations and models, for they may be the best or simplest evidence, have fewer inconsistencies or cover more data; admit the extent, burden, importance and value of alternative assumptions and perspectives.

This analysis will not imply that the goal of developing these skills and attitudes has been fully achieved; rather, it will, when relevant, signpost evidence of the children exercising these skills and attitudes in various ways.

5.4. Drama Pedagogy and Critical Thinking in Children

The imaginary, collaborative and interpersonal processes of drama were viewed in relation to a process of “*critical citizenisation*” (Tully, 2004, p.99) that was conducted in each class, depending on the specific issues that emerged in each case (*ibid*). From interviewing the three class teachers I found that the various social issues and problematic subject matters related to their classes could give me ample material in order to explore alternative ways of approaching certain social concepts such as diversity, bullying, identity, self-acceptance, and citizenship, which seemed to be challengeable within their own society. The main purpose of the workshops was to look at the evidence of critical thinking, rather than compare the children’s critical thinking in any quantitative way or to assess whether their critical thinking levels have improved. It was to help the children feel worthy and unique members of their class and cultivate their inquisitive spirit and problem-solving skills, while working towards the aims and aspirations listed above, through fun participation in carefully designed drama activities and conventions. Various possibilities suggested by Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) were examined, such as “*be[ing] open to difference and tolerant of diverse views whatever their source*”, [...], “*listen[ing] for the silenced*”, [...] “*talk[ing] with the powerless*”, “*see[ing] beneath the stereotype*”, [...], “*hear[ing] above the rhetoric*”, [...], “*listen[ing] for new voices*”, [...], “*continu[ing] to question, to argue, to rage, to laugh, and literally to make up our own minds*” (p.57). The next sections will delineate the ways in which certain principles and conventions have been explored.

5.4.1. Use of Imaginative Contexts

Cecily O' Neill (1995) argues that the “*what if*” (p.153) and “*as if*” (*ibid*) drama catches children’s imagination and prompts them to breathe life into the school concepts and subjects, for it “*generates and embodies significant meanings and raises significant questions*” (*ibid*). The immediate and real experiences provided by the imaginative contexts, she suggests, provide children with opportunities to make connections with their own lives, to confront facts and ideas in distinct contexts, to consider or reconsider other people’s viewpoints and to create meanings as they act together in situations. According to Dorothy Heathcote *et al.* (1984), in drama you “*put yourself in other people’s shoes and by using personal experience to help you to understand their point of view you may discover more than you knew when you started*” (*ibid*, p.20).

Conversely, Plesek (1997) states that provoking the imagination using words to explain or visualise various concepts, regarding opposite versions of events or happenings, reversing imagined events, being in the shoes of certain characters and thinking of alternatives for what is being thought or reflected on and making connections with real life events may be critical thinking activators. In view of particular social issues that are typical of Cypriot society in general and education in specific, in agreement with the teachers, I attempted to place drama in various contexts using incidents that could frame a story or incidents and characters from existing stories. The objective here was twofold. First, I aimed to challenge attitudes that rejected other people, other times, new or unfamiliar approaches, behaviours and ideas. Second, I wanted to invite children to imagine

other viewpoints and cases in which abstract concepts can come alive through the dialogues, the actions and the interaction of certain people in a particular time, place and context, “*confronted by situations which change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges*” (Heathcote, 1967, p.20). All the above are indispensable elements for the cultivation of critical thinking as a way of viewing, feeling and working in and with the world (Barnett, 1997).

It is worth mentioning that before coming to an agreement about the possible contexts framing the drama sessions, there seemed to be a tendency by teachers towards a more moralistic or didactic version of the stories that “*could pass on proper life models and messages worth noting*” (second class teacher interviewed on 12/04/2012). Kalantzis and Cope (2012) explain the constitution of this kind of stories. According to them, a didactic teacher will strive to offer knowledge that has been so exhaustively explained that it allows no room for creativity, doubt or personal input by the learner. What is more, he or she will impart knowledge in absolute terms, almost dogmatically, for example in terms of what is right or wrong. In a nutshell, the epicentre of didactic teaching is the teacher — rather than the learner — as well as his/her role as an almost omnipotent force of transmitting knowledge. Conversely, what learners do is viewed as a simple, passive process of receiving knowledge.

On these grounds, all the teachers argued that a story or an imaginative context is considered good depending on the “moral” it conveys. In the third class teacher’s words, “*there is a variety of stories out there, but if there is not a moral meaning, something children need to remember in order to become better people*

and improve their lives, there is no point to use it in class” (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012). The teachers explained that most of the stories they themselves use are political, religious or social and that they employ them primarily as a means of achieving what described as “*soft discipline*” (Foucault, 1980, p.119) rather than to enhance creativity and imagination. The standard procedure followed when a story is involved in the teaching process is that children are asked to write up the moral meaning of the story in their notebooks. As the second class teacher pointed out,

“most of us, including me, unfortunately, have the tendency of using story time and stories in general for the purposes of either corroborating certain models of good and moral behaviour by encouraging them to imitate the protagonists of the stories who exhibit such behaviours. [...] To confirm that our aim can be better reached or at least, be accomplished in a way, we place great emphasis on the moral meaning of the story by the end of the class when we talk or when we ask children to repeat the meaning in their own words in a paragraph in their notebooks” (second class teacher interviewed on 12/04/2012).

This approach ties in with the theoretical work of the French social theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault (1980 cited in Lawler, 2008, p.57) examines several types of power exercised on people. He breaks down the notions of juridical (or law-like) power and normalising (or regulatory) power and discusses the differences of these two parallels. He suggests that juridical (or law-like) power uses more direct language that reflects

the consequences of disobedience, while normalising (or regulatory) power uses a type of manipulative language which aims at altering the demeanour of children by convincing them that such modifications will work to their benefit. It is the normalising form of power that is employed in didactic stories in the scholastic context, as their morals are seen as a means of promoting righteous behaviour in return for happiness and success. In an effort to identify with the protagonists of these stories, the children are persuaded to modify and adjust their behaviour accordingly (Foucault, 1980, cited in Lawler, 2008, p.57).

Foucault (1980, cited in Lawler, 2008, p.57) states that this approach is more efficient and less tyrannical than that enforced through the juridical form of power. In a similar vein, Tatar (1992) argues that when children are directed on what they should or should not do, they are more likely to object to the kind of behaviour imposed on them. When presented with stories with this kind of behaviour as a route to discursive thinking, they are more likely to accept and adopt it. Thus, the prototype of the docile child is constructed, accepted and reproduced (*ibid*, p.xvi) while, the prevalence of this model of didacticism promotes and serves the fruitful socialisation, civilisation and moralisation of the child (*ibid*). Foucault (1980) writes:

“If power were anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces

discourses” (p.119).

In the following paragraphs, I will explain my choice of material chosen in the building of drama work that had the children’s critical thinking at heart, while attempting to challenge the use of stories as vehicles of soft power, as so described. Admittedly, this was a difficult and challenging approach because it was often tempting to subtly adopt the didactic style the teachers referred to through my drama agenda; this was the case, for example, when I challenged issues of prejudice that emerged throughout the workshops — an element that typically featured in the third primary class. My aim was to eliminate this element while taking the children’s experiences, pre-existing views and attitudes into consideration; the latter could actually be exploited in order to explore possibilities of developing critical thinking. These particularities necessitated working more closely with the children. In total, I used two drama schemes for classes PC1 and PC3 and one drama scheme for PC2. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I chose to present one scheme per class, so that I could analyse the data collected more thoroughly and so that the data I included in this study was balanced in terms of volume.

5.4.1.1. Drama Scheme for the First Primary School Class (PC1)

“The child with the long, sharp ears”

This context has been selected for the potential it provides for the enhancement of critical thinking skills and dispositions; it questions why and how laws are made and enforced; it recognises the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviours such as bullying and racism on individuals and communities; it reflects on moral, social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people’s perspectives and experiences; it challenges the responsibility of “silent observers” in social affairs. Undeniably, this is a compelling theme in an era when racist tendencies characterise the Cypriot society; what is more, the economic crisis has led to a resurgence of xenophobia, since foreigners are considered as one of the main causes of unemployment and lower salaries. According to data from the latest annual report (2014) of the Authority against Discrimination demonstrating racist and xenophobic tendencies on the island, from 2004 until 2013 1,273 (out of 850,000 population) complaints were filed by foreigners and ethnic communities; the majority of these complaints involved discrimination based on ethnic origin and/or religion. Considering that these incidents were recorded in a society in which ethnic communities account for approximately 20% of the population and 10% of the students are of a migrant origin⁸, the need for implementing a project for enhancing critical thinking on the basis of an urgent social problem was of primary importance.

⁸ This information is available at the Cypriot Child’s Rights Commission reports (2012-14) and in various online newspapers, such as Phileleftheros (25/03/2014).

5.4.1.2. Drama Scheme for the Second Primary School Class (PC2)

“Agapi’s disappearance”

The alarming rate at which incidents of sexual abuse of children have been increasing in Cyprus constituted the main reason for which this topic was chosen; the data, provided by both the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF) (2014) and the police, is indicative of the gravity of the current situation. As recorded by APHVF and published in the newspaper in 2011, the hotline set up by the Association in Cyprus for victims of violence recorded 150 cases of violence against children in one year. Of these, 28 cases entailed sexual abuse, while 129 were recorded cases of physical violence. In 2012, when I implemented my research, the police reported 176 cases of child abuse, of which 41 cases were related to sexual violence against minors. The Cypriot Commissioner for the Protection of Children’s Rights, Leda Koursoumba, stressed that approximately one in five children falls victim to some form of sexual abuse; these numbers may be conservative estimates, as many cases are kept confidential by the welfare office and other non-governmental organisations (Sigma TV Channel, 01/10/2013). But it does not end there. Every so often, attempted abductions of children in crowded places, such as department stores and shopping centres, are also reported (report presented by Sigma TV channel, 19/05/2012).

I felt this theme was appropriate, as it explored the story of a missing girl of the children-participants’ age while the element of mystery opened up possibilities for various activities and conventions applied for the purposes of

analysis, synthesis, developing an inquiring attitude, making decisions, solving problems, being open to the data presented and justifying its correctness.

As noted earlier, this theme was first suggested to frame the context of PC1; nonetheless, the class teacher and the head-teacher were apprehensive that some of the parents might find this context offensive and unacceptable, as its discourse involved heinous deeds such as kidnapping or sexual abuse. The reaction of both the teacher and the head-teacher reflects the significance of Bakhtin's (1990) notion of schooling power located within the concepts of "**answerability**" (Graue *et al.*, 2001, p.473), which represents a certain kind of responsibility (the ethical response in the development of a child as decided upon the families-schools relationships that are, in fact, "*a set of refracted relationships located within particular frames of history and biography: parents in relation to children, teachers in relation to students, parents in relation to teachers, home in relation to school*" (*ibid*) and "**addressivity**" (*ibid*), which provides a platform of understanding why and how one might promote certain types of relationships around schooling; that is, who gets heard in the discourse of the school; the ways in which acts have trajectories — created for presumed audiences and hoped-for ends (*ibid*).

5.4.1.3. Drama Scheme for the third primary school class (PC3)

“He Who Says Yes, He Who Says No”, by Bertolt Brecht (1930)

This version of a “*lehrstück*” (Thomson & Sacks, 2006, p.104) didactic play, as Brecht would call it, was used as a pre-text and seemed appropriate, as it raises questions of common good and mutual responsibility among the members of a society who need to think critically about issues that have long been taken for granted and about decisions that might affect their lives in one way or another. According to Brecht’s scenario, an epidemic breaks out in a remote village and many of the inhabitants fall ill. The teacher of the village decides to go on a dangerous journey with a group of students across the mountain range in order to solicit advice and obtain medicine. Going against the teacher’s warning, a boy whose mother is ill joins the group of the brave people. But misfortune awaits: during the journey, the boy falls ill himself, thus, unintentionally, halting the rescue operation. His team now face the following dilemma: should they take the boy back to the village or sacrifice one individual for the sake of an entire community? Because of this turn of events, people as individuals and as members of a group are called upon to reconsider the situation in depth and make a decision anew (*ibid*).

Taking into account the prejudice against females and the stereotypes held and cultivated in the location of PS3, as described in the use of Imaginative contexts section above, after a discussion with the class teacher, I decided to change the gender of the character, from male to female, and record any modifications in the students’ reaction. This was a challenging point in my

research because, apart from the general aims of the study related to the various ways drama pedagogy and conventions might be used to enhance children's critical thinking, the issue of habitus and its strong roots was among the most important observations included in the report of that school, as the class teacher asserted (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012). Even though attempting to change attitudes deeply rooted in habitus would be a totally unrealistic aim, it was quite compelling to see whether children could think of alternatives prior to making a final decision.

5.5. Children's Voice and Critical Thinking

Giving children a voice means giving them the opportunity to express their opinions about matters that affect them and to contribute knowledge related to the social, cultural and political world they live in, demanding that their input should be heard (Clark, 2005). The growing interest in this sparked the emergence of a new image of children, influenced by constructivist theories. According to the latter, children are viewed as capable social actors and as competent constructors of valid meaning, capable of interjecting valuable, endorsed and useful ideas to all aspects of life with a right to participate in the world they live in actively and acknowledging the world in alternative (not inferior) ways to adults (Clark, 2005; Cannella, 1998; Wyness, 1996). As Christensen and James (2000) state:

“We need to treat children as social actors in their own right in contexts

where traditionally, they have been denied those rights of participation and their voices have remained unheard” (p.2).

In the same way, Dahlberg *et al.* (1999) warn adults against perpetrating their opinions, attitudes and knowledge on children, as this may reduce their need to be responsible for their own life. Their concern echoes Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the children’s right to be heard and to express their own voices:

“This is part of a wider ethical project of establishing a culture where the children are seen as human beings in their own right, as worth listening to, where we do not impose our own knowledge and categorizations before children have posed their questions and made their own hypotheses” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p.137).

Placing the children’s voice centrally in my fieldwork, I attempted to encourage the children to take advantage of the liberating educational potentials that drama may offer. These include its imaginative possibilities and the personal empowerment in terms of confidence, social dynamic, engagement, transformation (Gallagher, 2000; Greene, 2000; hooks, 1997) and a **holistic development** (Dewey, 1916) in the context of secure and inclusive sessions based on various cultural identities and theatrical genres (Neelands, 2003, p.19). The concept of the children’s voice as an inclusive prolongation of a combination of various critical thinking skills and dispositions was the key reference point for the **ensemble pedagogy** adopted in this project and its data analysis, as it was mainly expressed

in two main areas elaborated below, those of the children's **participation *in role*** and ***out of role***. With regard to these components, my aims are the following. First, I will examine whether there is any evidence to show that, by inviting children to participate in these drama sessions they developed critical thinking skills and dispositions. Second, I will review how, by using drama conventions as research tools, I recorded the participants' beliefs in issues emerged in the context of drama and in general issues of critical thinking. I wanted to establish whether they believed that on certain occasions they did think critically and, which of the activities related to the artistic/dramatic experience provided them with the opportunity to do so.

It is important to note that the data presented here take into account both the girls' and boys' voices and seek to identify any gender-specific differences; I also aim to shed light on numerous discrepancies observed when comparing their participation in role within various conventions and out of role within circle-conversational time as well as their level of linguistic ability to express themselves in both instances. This is an issue I will specifically examine as being directly conditioned by gender.

5.6. First Unit of Analysis: Working with PC1

5.6.1. The Creation of a Community of Inquiry

Nussbaum (2010) states that thinking in children can be best developed and improved within a democratic collaborative community of inquiry as it anticipates the 21st century challenges of a real world on the basis of skills such as questioning, negotiating, compromise, taking responsibility, cooperation and collaboration. These communities of inquiry, as Claxton (1999) paraphrases the relevant term given by Brown are:

“places that emphasise the active strategic nature of learning, where children routinely engage in a search for understanding and effort after meaning and in which they develop insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and access to their own repertoires of strategies for learning... And in communities of inquiry, members are critically dependent on each other, expertise is deliberately distributed, no one is an island; no one knows it all; collaborative learning is necessary for survival. This interdependence promotes an atmosphere of joint responsibility, mutual respect, and a sense of personal and group identity” (Claxton, 1999, p.288-289).

Fisher (2005) sees communities of inquiry as an opportunity to develop children’s thinking and voices by encouraging them to pose questions and solve problems by utilising dialogue and discussion. According to Wittgenstein, *“the limits of your language are the limits of your world”* (Wittgenstein cited in Coup,

2009, p.63), and for me the community of inquiry was a chance to model thinking and provide children with opportunities to apply the modes of language and opinion justification, which are required in critical thinking. This need not take the form of contrived set lessons, such as those devised by Lipman (1980, 2003) and Fisher (1996, 1997, 2005). Rather, this community of inquiry is created as moral or social issues incidentally arise from within this framework; one such example is the question a student from the first primary class posed: “*Why do we consider different people as weaker or ‘inferior’?*” (appendix:1, PC1: 2,8). This question led to a lively class discussion about the validity and moral correctness of determining the value of people according to the perceived level of development of their culture. This was intended to be achieved on the basis of principles such as respect, dialogue, collaboration among students and teachers, risk taking, security, a sense of belonging and connection with relevant issues which could be perceived as real by the community.

The ethos of a community is ideally built on respect, dialogue, tolerance, cohesion, security, a sense of belonging, valuing all ideas, trust, support, caring for the conventions of collaborative inquiry and listening to alternative points of view. This ethos was the ideal we were aspiring to and provided a powerful learning environment in which challenging ethical questions and concepts such as the good and bad, fairness, rules, friendship and betrayal, could be dealt with; students were invited to make decisions on these issues in the future whilst they had the opportunity to practise them in a safe environment, where they could express themselves freely without worrying about the consequences (Department of

Education and Skills [DfES], 2004, p.49; Fisher, 2005; Neelands, 2008; Winston, 2006).

The implementation of explicit ground rules through a drama contract was seen as an essential pedagogical strategy which concerned children's thinking and behaving; through the contract, they were encouraged to **function on the basis of dialogue and respect towards other people's views**, as well as respond and behave accordingly.

5.6.1.1. Adopting the Idea of a Contract

“For classroom drama to succeed, teachers and children need to be clear about what the rules actually are and they must agree to follow them”, argue Winston and Tandy (2009, p.5). Neelands (1984) adds that, in order to achieve the above-mentioned goal, *“the first essential preparation is the setting up of a drama contract”* (p.76). The establishment of the contract in the first session of the workshops in each class was particularly important because it was intended to allow children to feel safe and more willing to participate in their class as appreciated members; this, in turn, raised their levels of motivation, confidence and contribution (Borba & Borba 1982, p.4; Dickinson *et al.* 2006, p.39).

The classrooms which accommodated the three classes featured behaviour contracts on the classroom walls, positioned in various places by the

teachers. Nonetheless, this practice was not endorsed by all teachers; the third class teacher emphatically stated:

“In my experience, most classes have posters with rules stuck on the classroom walls. Most of the times, however, these posters are merely part of the decoration; they are also something that the teacher has arbitrarily designed. It isn’t a set of mutually decided and accepted rules. This may explain why children seem to completely disregard them” (third class teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012).

This was not a new revelation: during my observation sessions, I noted that most of the children disobeyed the rules featured on their classroom walls. Because of this, with the teachers’ permission, the initial class contracts were transformed into drama contracts (appendix:4) designed through a democratic dialogue with the children at the beginning of our first workshop. The children were invited to discuss whether they were happy with the previous class contract, point out the rules they were comfortable with and then, suggest alternative rules, where necessary. This approached the idea discussed in the literature review, according to which drama could contribute to the creation of a positive democratic and secure environment that is based on dialogue between the learners and the teacher (Dickinson *et al.*, 2006, p.38; Neelands, 1984, p.76).

In spite of the importance of such elements as mutual respect, understanding and cooperation for the cultivation of critical thinking, as it was explained in the literature review chapter, I felt that I should develop an interesting and playful ensemble atmosphere, where these elements were not imposed as

rules. Instead, this was intended to be an environment where children could feel safe, respected, worthy and by extension, sure that *“they won’t be made to look silly and that their ideas will be valued”* (Kitson & Spiby 1995, p.12). In this way, the agreement between me and the children upon the rules: *“Listen when someone is speaking”*, *“Be polite, kind and show you care”* and *“There is no right or wrong in drama”* were phrased so as to encourage them to feel that their actions would not be judged and their opinions would be accepted and respected by everyone despite their differences or limitations, not just when working as a whole class, in which case the teacher could easily identify whether they followed the rules, but also when working in groups and pairs or, more crucially, when the class teacher was not in the classroom.

Through the agreement that children should *“do their best all the time”*, I attempted to promote a sense of success, encouraging teamwork in both the discussions and performances. In terms of critical thinking, they were encouraged to think deeply and broadly in various ways according to the stimuli provided (Paul *et al.*, 1987), considering Winston and Tandy’s (2009) suggestion that the success of classroom drama relies on *“the children knowing what is expected of them and appreciating the rewards that come from doing it well”* (p.5). A good illustration of this is a comment made by the second class teacher:

“This drama contract worked as an alarm clock for most of the children because whenever they didn’t follow the rules, the others made sure they reminded them. This often made the naughty ones adapt their behaviours according to that of the majority of their classmates. However, the most

important fact was that the majority of them remembered all the rules”
(second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012).

This does not mean that every single child followed the rules from the beginning or for the entire duration of this project, of course. This was especially evident, according to the third class teacher’s interviews, in classes such as PC3:

“I was looking forward to seeing whether they would at least try to follow the rules you set up together. I knew — and I told you from the beginning — that this would not be easy, even though these rules should have been established since they were very young. However, observing their responses at the drama workshops I have to admit that even though it took some of them time to conform to the ‘new settings’, the results are impressive” (third class teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012).

In concluding terms: the children’s refusal to follow the regulations was not just a matter of lack of discipline, but rather one of familiarity: the students were used to disregarding their own school’s code of conduct — as their teachers admitted in their interviews — so they assumed that the project’s rules could also be disobeyed. For this reason, each session began with a review of the ground rules; what is more, when it was deemed necessary, I asked the students to review the rules again, to promote a sense of control. Here it is important to note that, apart from the issues of behaviour and participation, I encountered another problem of a different nature: most children seemed to lack basic discussion skills in reasonable and reflective ways. When, for example, students were asked to express their opinions on whether the parents should keep the child (PC1), whether

Agapi should listen to a stranger (PC2) or whether a young person should be allowed to take a risk (PC3), the children responded by “*saying what they thought*” through positive or negative sentences-responses without providing justification for their response. To tackle this problem effectively, during our interaction in and out of role I kept on asking them **why** they thought the way they did through encouraging questions. At the same time, we had agreed on the following specific rules to ensure a successful discussion by the end of the first session:

- We all listen carefully to others.
- We show respect to others.
- Only one person can speak at a time.
- We think before we speak.
- We explain what we say.
- We think about what other people say.
- We give reasons for what we say.
- We can disagree and explain the reason for our disagreement.

With my input and through re-enforcing the contract, the children seemed to accept and apply these rules to a satisfactory extent when in discussion with others — I will refer to a relevant example later in this chapter — while at the same time, they were used by the class teachers who were present at the workshops for further development and practice. The interest demonstrated by the teachers as regards the children’s struggle to communicate their opinions and their further cooperation was of paramount importance for the participants’ interactions and ways of responding to the theme under study, that of drama and critical

thinking, during the short period of time within which the workshops took place. What is more, the teachers attempted to take advantage of the various drama contexts and conversations the children were exposed to and to adopt the rules agreed in drama class in their own lessons in order to familiarise students with them. As one of the teachers explained: *“I stuck your contract on a corner of the whiteboard and every now and again I refer to it to remind the children of one of the rules”* (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012). Another teacher argued: *“I admit that your idea worked to our advantage: the children knew that once they signed the contract, they would be forced to follow its rules during all classes, not just drama class!”* (third class teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012). Indeed, despite some misdemeanours, the children seemed quite willing to follow the discussion rules when in conversation and to take part in other tasks respectively, as shown below.

5.6.1.2. Employing Dialogue in PC1

“Life by its very nature is dialogic” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.293). Bakhtin’s statement reflects the very philosophy underpinning this project: dialogue. Dialogue was the cornerstone of the drama workshops as a whole, as participants engaged in it through various conventions with the aim of taking control over their learning, constructing their knowledge, developing their thinking and making sense of their drama-life experiences. As stated in the literature review chapter, the use of language and dialogue in drama, especially for the purposes of

cultivating critical thinking, tends to be spontaneous, complicated and interactive due to its operation under dramatic tension and imagined contexts. As Heathcote (1984) argues: “[d]rama is not stories retold in action. Drama is human beings confronted by situations which change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges” (p.48).

In dealing with the tension, children-participants of these workshops were encouraged to explore the notions of “*contact, communication and the negotiation of meaning*” (O’Neill & Lambert, 1982, p.13) through various forms of dialogues in and out of role. One example of this is a task applied in PC1 (appendix:1, PC1:5.5), in which children, in the role of a group of explorers, are confronted with irreversible facts. In this version, they encounter the child of the story lying in the corner of a cave in the forest, covered with blood; they will later discover from a letter the boy wrote that he cut his own ears as an indication of the oppression he suffered, his despair and, ultimately, his subordination to the King’s demands. In the first phase, the children were encouraged to discuss the decisions and actions they should take in role: to do this, they had to consider the other citizens’ unfavourable attitudes towards that child and his family, as well as the conflict this story caused within the community and the clash of the citizens with their king. The second phase involved expressing their opinions as regards the child’s action to cut his ears, as the examples below illustrate.

❖ **Example (appendix:1, PC1:5.5):**

Girl 1: “*The child chose to cut his own ears and disappear from the village; to me, this action is a synonym of oppression. It is also an indication that he chose to*

obey the commands of the king instead of defending his rights and his family. I know that he is just a child, so the king's power and what that meant for the life of his family must have been a terrible burden. However, his decision only made the situation worse: on the one hand, he gave the king the satisfaction of thinking he had got rid of him. On the other hand, his disappearance devastated his family. I am not sure what good he thought would come of this action. One assumption is that he tried to protect his parents. But in the story, it is the parents who are supposed to be protecting the child... In the end, although everybody wants to protect the others, they do so in all with the wrong ways..."

Boy 1: *"By cutting his own ears, the boy risked dying of hemorrhage. Granted, he may have acted in such a way in order to relieve his parents from his existence. But this argument was short-sighted: it didn't take into consideration that his parents would be immersed in sorrow because of his death, and the guilt that they were unable to protect their own child. This thought would torture them till the last day of their lives."*

Girl 2: *"From my point of view, his decision to cut his ears was totally wrong. I guess he thought that this would make him an equal member of a society in which he would now look exactly the same as the others. On the other hand, as my classmates noted before, this might cost him his own life. He shouldn't follow the king's demands without considering the implications of his actions. This also goes for the possibility of having a plastic surgery, which the king suggested. You might think, his parents should be responsible for this decision, not him. But no.*

We may be young, yet we can think and make our own decisions on issues that affect us.”

Girl 3: *“The way I see it, you don’t have to look like everyone else to enjoy equal rights. People who look different have exactly the same rights as anyone else. At the end of the day, who decides what’s “normal” and what isn’t? We are all different. There is no way to look exactly the same as someone else, unless you are twins... People often force us to change, and we foolishly do it, just because we want to fit in. The bad news is that we care more about our external appearance than our inner selves as personalities. This is the reason we develop racist attitudes: if someone isn’t like everybody else, they are automatically bad.”*

A model of dialogue such as the one above can be read as “*a social act*” (O’Toole & Lepp, 2000, p.28) where the sharing of the children’s ideas is necessary for them to generate understanding and learning and hold ownership of their knowledge (*ibid*). On these terms, dialogue is not eliminated in the mere exchange of ideas but as “*a struggle to create meaning which is central to the way we think, understand, read, interact, form beliefs [and] acquire ideologies*” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.28). The children’s interactions, exchanges and subsequent reflections about various ideas related to drama provided them with opportunities to listen to each other, cooperate and question their points of views and those of others. As shown from the above extracts, the children exchanged ideas reasonably and in ways that showed attention to one another’s arguments.

According to Bakhtin (1981), ideology has been “*gradually and slowly wrought out of others’ words that have been acknowledged and assimilated*” (p.345). It is this process of constructing ideologies through dialogues that according to Cohen (2004) opens up possibilities for the enhancement of critical thinking. This happens as the latter takes place in an interactive group context, in which dialogue plays a critical role in decision making to solve a problem and resolve competing goals, build up shared understanding of the given task, and over time construct relationships that improve team cohesiveness and trust. By positioning themselves or by finding themselves positioned in various dialogic interactions, the children of this project expressed different positions while they acknowledged that this variety enables distinct perspectives on life to reflect upon (Bakhtin, 1981). This is more evident in the following extracts from an activity (appendix:1, PC1: 5.5) in which the children of PC1 had to connect two issues, namely bullying and racism, with their real-life experiences:

❖ **Example (appendix:1, PC1:5.5):**

Antri: *“If the story were taking place in Cyprus, how would Cypriots react, in your opinion?”*

Boy 1: *“I am pretty sure that he would be treated in a similar way like in our story... I’m not saying our president would act in the same way as the king of the story. I’m talking about Cypriots in general: we are not very comfortable with the concept of diversity yet. More importantly, many older people who are not educated will refuse to accept someone if they are different, unlike the younger*

generation who is more open-minded and flexible. Of course, not all young people are; but the majority, for sure.”

Girl 1: *“Miss, if you are different here, they may hit you or kick you out.”*

Antri: *“Why is that?”*

Girl 1: *“Because most of us underestimate people who are different because of their race, colour or characteristics. Most of the times we bully them. I’m ashamed to admit it but unfortunately, it is the truth.”*

Boy 2: *“No, I disagree. It depends on the person...”*

Antri: *“What do you mean?”*

Boy 2: *“I mean that not all people behave in the same way. My parents, for example, have friends from different countries and my siblings and I are friends with them too... I know that not everyone is nice to them: they sometimes tell us that their classmates make fun of them because of their colour or because they are different in general and this hurts them.”*

Girl 2: *“Yes, you are right! Don’t you remember a boy who came last year to our school and some children made fun of him because he was black? It was like the child of the story... Some children were so mean! They even told him to go to another school. I feel so sorry for him... Luckily for him, he actually went to a different school.”*

Girl 3: *“I think things have started changing when it comes to accepting difference in the last five to ten years, I think... This is what my parents say. At*

least, the society has finally accepted that people with special needs are equal to us, although this is not the same for people from different ethnic backgrounds... Some people disrespect them; others treat them well because they pity them. I believe that both behaviours are wrong; we need to respect and approach everyone appropriately, not because we feel sorry for them – this means that we consider them inferior — but because we acknowledge that they are equal.”

As the above extract indicates, through the children’s interaction, meanings in dialogue are not fixed and can go far beyond a superficial change in ideas. In fact, they are part of a process, as one idea is affected by another in the struggle for meaning among interacting voices, thinking patterns and attitudes towards issues such as that of diversity (Bakhtin, 1981). It is this process of thinking that encouraged the children in this example to make their reasoning visible, go beyond recalling or restating previously acquired information, question ideas and stances that may be considered as granted, provide evidence or logical arguments in support of their statements, choices, or judgements and think of multiple perspectives – all evidences of critical thinking development (Castoriadis, 1987;1998; Moon, 2007).

As the Department of Education and Skills’ (DfES) (2004) report suggests, *“the curriculum should build on pupils’ strengths, interests and experiences”* (p.11). Within or based on imaginative contexts and role-plays applied for the purposes of this project, episodes and activities were based on relevant problems which were perceived as real by the community and which

highlighted clear links between real life and learning. Such examples tentatively remind us of some of the claims of drama education according to which authentic contexts are considered as the platform for building meaningful learning experiences with students; here, at least, we can see some justification since the children's collaboration and interaction through dialogue about issues and contexts related to preceding drama tasks enabled them to travel through the nexus of their reality, draw knowledge and deal with what they were confronted with either in real or fictional worlds (O'Neil & Lambert, 1982). In other words, the children's prior and current knowledge was recognised, valued and applied in a more meaningful context which did not preclude the transfer of critical thinking skills and dispositions to authentic real-world context in which they could think and reflect upon problems and issues encountered in daily life (Bruke, 1995; McPeck, 1990; Neelands, 1984, O'Neil & Lambert, 1982). This observation concurs with what Handy (1989) wrote of an ideal school, which prepared children for the future:

“The upside-down school would make study more like work, based on real problems to be solved or real tasks to be done, in groups of mixed ages and different types of ability, all of them useful. Not only would people learn more in such a school, because they would see the point and purpose of what they were doing, but it would give them a better idea of the world they would be entering” (Handy, 1989 cited in Dryden & Vos, 2001, p.75).

Throughout this project I had the chance to observe closely and reflect upon the way the children tried out new ideas, different ways of doing and seeing things in “*what if*” contexts and I positioned myself as agent of possibilities within the applied creative learning process without claiming to be “*an omnipotent expert*” (Neelands, 1984, p.24). Rather, as a colleague and equal member of their group, I attempted to foresee unexpected actions, suggestions and behaviours on the part of the children, cooperate with them either in role or out of role (O’Neill & Lambert, 1982, p.13) and build on these, as Vygotsky (1998) suggests in his Zone of Proximal Development theory. Standing back was central in promoting the children’s autonomy, attracting their interest and encouraging contribution, decisions, responses, actions, reflection and – just perhaps – some kind of transformation in a way not normally available to them in school activities (Bowell & Heap, 2001). As I stated in my reflective journal:

“My choice to stand back was inspired by the observations: through working together with the children, listening to them, seeing them learning from each other, and using what’s outside and inside to assist them in their contributions in and out of play, I sought to support the process of their thinking by allowing them to engage in a playful purposeful way” (reflective journal notes on 08/06/2012).

The way I positioned myself throughout drama either in role or out of role, in and out of various conventions applied for the purposes of this project and the extent to which this contributed to the related aims is further discussed in the relevant subchapters that follow.

5.6.1.3. *Forum Theatre*⁹ (appendix:1, PC1: 3.3; 4.3)

According to Greene (1995), aesthetic spaces function as an outlet for expression for children and educators alike, by providing a safe space for them to explore their thoughts, act out their fears and convictions, understand other people's emotions and externalise their own. As Popen (2006, p.126) puts it, “*aesthetic spaces*” enable individuals to function in “*fictitious*” settings which allow for “*transitive*” knowing as well as “*transformative*” learning. Conversely, Boal (2013) argues:

“Theatre has nothing to do with buildings or other physical constructions. Theatre — or theatricality — is the capacity, this human property which allows man to observe himself in action, in activity. The self-knowledge thus acquired allows him to be the subject (the one who observes) of another subject (the one who acts). It allows him to imagine variations of his action, to study alternatives. Man can see himself in the act of seeing, in the act of acting, in the act of feeling, the act of thinking. Feel himself feeling, think himself thinking” (p.13).

⁹ *Forum Theatre* is an audience-interactive theatrical form invented and developed by Augusto Boal as part of his standard techniques to approach his Theatre of the Oppressed, with the intention of providing communities with opportunities to explore issues of oppression, disappointment or frustration about issues they have experienced at a moment of crisis. In performance presented in front of the audience-community, the play is run once through from start to finish, so that audience members understand the situation presented and importantly, the problems within it. Then, the play is re-enacted; however, this time the audience members are encouraged to interrupt the action at any point by shouting “stop!” as soon as they detect an oppressive instant. In what this means, the audience has the chance to go onstage in a Theatre play, replace the struggling character, and try out an idea, so as to explore alternatives and improve the situation. All ideas are welcome and there is no right or wrong. As Boal noted, the role of theatre is not “*to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which all possible paths may be examined*” (Boal, 1985, p.141).

It was because of this significance of aesthetic spaces that it was essential to create the convention of *Forum Theatre* for the children of PC1. The aim was to provide them with the opportunity to take part in a critical dialogue and explore a variety of themes, as well as foster critical thinking in a safe, humane setting (Boal, 2003;2006). As stated in the literature review chapter, this Boalian approach was applied in this project, as it takes the role-play experience a step further; the children in the role of audience/spectators are invited to empathise with a character, or engage in perspective-taking, to learn how other people perceive and interpret the world. They are also taught the importance of taking action — in this case, through their intervention in the performance with the intention of changing things for the better (Boal, 2003). This approach highlighted critical moments of democratic skills, such as critical listening, deliberating, identifying compromise and understanding diverse perspectives, all of which are necessary components for the cultivation of critical thinking (*ibid*).

Another crucial element that was taken into consideration in the analysis of children's responses was the children's emotional fluctuations, which ranged from enthusiastically voicing ideas and questions to remaining thoughtfully silent, staring at the speaker. The four role-play scenarios (appendix:1, PC1:2.5; 2.6) in which the children improvised prior to the *Forum Theatre* convention covered a broad range of approaches towards the child with the long, sharp ears and his foster parents. As soon as they are notified of the adoption, they are bombarded with criticism by other children, parents and friends as well as the people representing the church. In all the proposed scenarios, which featured various

catastrophes, bullying, oppression or acceptance, the protagonists came up with possibilities and alternatives and triggered the participation and intervention of a large part of the audience while presenting scenes in the context of *Forum Theatre*. These interventions ranged from relatively playful attempts to deflect the unwanted attention of the king and the more powerful people to strong confrontation and (mimed) physical violence. Interestingly, the more predefined situations in the role-play which were based on specific scenarios became much more compelling as soon as the spectators intervened.

Below are verbatim (albeit translated) extracts from a section of the children's role-play in four-member groups.

❖ **Examples (appendix:1, PC1:2.6):**

*Table 2: Extracts from role-play activity performed by four-member groups
(Scenario: The child with the long, sharp ears)*

How might other people approach the parents as soon as they are informed that they (finally) adopted a child with long, sharp ears?

(The parents' responses are marked with an asterisk*)

Group 1: Other children

-Look at that boy! Isn't he funny?

-I can't believe that he is going to be in our class! He is so I don't want him!

Group 2: Other parents

-Me neither.

-Me neither.

-Don't be so strict... We could become friends. Why not give him a chance?

-Because he is not one of us.

-He is a beast!

-Poor boy...

-Don't you dare bring your child to school! We don't want him around our children!

*-*How can you be so nasty? He's just a child!*

- The headmaster will hear about this! We don't want you on the island anymore!

*-*Our child has the same rights as your children! Don't exaggerate!*

-Get out of the island now!

-We can't believe that you are willing to

Group 3: Family friends

keep this child!

*-*What kind of friends are you?*

-We only say this because we care about you and we want what's best for you.

*- *This is not a good way of showing your concern...*

-I feel sorry for you... I'm afraid we can't be friends any more...

*-*We don't need friends like you..!*

-Oh, we support you! Do not listen to them! Whatever you choose, we are on your side! Take care of the child and take care of yourselves!

Group 4: "Holy people"

-Oh, God! What is this?

*-*What do you mean? It's a normal child. Can't you see?*

-A normal child? You can't hide these ears... They are evil... Take him away! You can't keep this thing on our land!

-'This thing?' Oh, come on! It's just a child! I never expected the clergy to*

Group 5: The King

behave in this way...

-He is to be blamed for the drought this season!

-You need to perform an exorcism if you want to keep him!

-‘Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come;’ (psalm)

*-*An exorcism? Are you serious? Where is your love? Where is your acceptance?*

-God sent us this child in order to test us.

*-*It’s a shame to condemn a human being without a reason, let alone an innocent child ...*

-How dare you disobey my orders? You have two options: Either you stay without the child, or all three of you leave the island at once! This boy does not belong here!

*-*Leave the island? Just because our child is a little different?*

-This is not open to discussion! This is my island and these are my orders! If you go against them, you will regret it!

The extract chosen for elaboration comes from the scenario in which the parents and the child face the oppressor King, who threatens them with exile. The children were encouraged to discuss ways of enacting various roles and supporting the arguments of each side by using both their minds and bodies. As stated in the literature review, Boalian theatre, which the forum I attempted to apply here, promoted the idea of overcoming oppression using approaches that engage the participants intellectually, physically, and emotionally (Boal, 2003). In the episode below, after the presentation of the issue through a short performance with the support of the two critical friends,¹⁰ I in the role of the Joker, invited the

¹⁰After the two critical friends presented the play, we agreed that before the third workshop, I in the role of the Joker would invite my audience-children to express their views about what they had watched and discuss what they think the main problem was in order to ensure that the message that we aimed to pass through the play was received by the children. In the Joker's role I then asked them to identify which character they think was most oppressed, who was causing the oppression, as well as who can do something about it and how. In this way, I attempted to ensure that they took some time to actively consider what other options were available to the characters. Then, I asked them to consider what they would like to do if they were in the family's position and instead of asking them to explain their ideas, I invited them on stage to act out their ideas by choosing the moment they liked to begin and the person(s) they wanted to meet. Then the specified scene was performed again, with the children-spect-actors being free to play as they wanted whilst my critical friends – as actors – attempted to maintain the plot of the initial performance while taking into account the changes proposed by the children-spect-actors.

The children as spect-actors changed the ending (where an oppression is broken), despite efforts by the actors (my critical friends) to keep the original ending (with the oppressors succeeding). While the scene was being replayed, I asked the children to help me by providing more ideas and take matters into their own hands. The children-spect-actors agreed to continue by reviewing what was just happened and suggested “better” ideas according to my instructions. Aiming to evaluate the strategy-ideas, I challenged the children whether their solutions were useful,

children to join in. This was the moment when, after sharing several points of view, they attempted to change the situation of oppression, by taking the roles of protagonists and antagonist and argue in favour of their position accordingly. In other words, the children chose the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed themselves, being engaged physically in their own way and indicating in this way their self-determination, which was the most common feature of critical thinking along with being reflective-minded and imaginative. The dialogue below illustrates a small sample of the verbal expressions the children used in the role of either the king (oppressor) or the family members (oppressed). In fact, they constitute some suggestions on behalf of the children in terms of what the protagonists should say:

❖ **Example (appendix:1, PC1:3.3; 4.3)**

(1) King: *“I ordered you to leave the child alone to die or to drive it away from this island. You will be punished for disobeying my rules.”*

(2) Mother: *“In this country, people supposedly enjoy equal rights. Most importantly, these islanders used to be kind people. You yourself claim that this is the island of kindness! Why don’t you behave kindly towards this child and us?”*

(3) King: *“You seem to forget that every person on this island looks almost identical; that’s why there is a sense of kindness here.”*

positive or negative and whether the situation was improved. After such conversations we reversed the sequence and tried out different ideas in the same way in order to experiment with alternative outcomes.

(4) Father: *“You are the one who makes the rules and is in charge of everyone here. Please, reconsider!”*

(5) King: *“It is not up to me. It has to do with the rules of the kingdom. If I accept your child – which is against my beliefs anyway – I will need to bend the rules for other people, too. It cannot possibly happen. I need to be fair.”*

(6) Father: *“This is not about justice or injustice. It is about being human. You are a human – you showed us several times that you can show compassion.” (The father pleads with the king and bows before him to show respect).*

(7) Mother: *“It's a pity! This child deserves a good life with us!”*

(8) Father: *“For God's sake, show mercy!”*

(9) King: *“These are my rules! Decide whether you are going to stay on the island or live in exile! Why do you want this torture?”*

(10) Father: *“Stop bullying our child!”*

(11) Mother: *“What is the point in sending us to exile? How would you feel in our shoes? What if you were a common parent and not a king? Would you live in exile or obey these inhuman rules?”*

(12) Child: *“Have mercy on me — If I were your own child, would you force me into exile? Were you not a kid once? How would you feel if you were in my position?”*

In this extract and in their general response to the strategy of *Forum Theatre*, the children tried to devise arguments in their attempt to defend themselves as equal citizens who can voice their beliefs despite the threats and dangers they face. According to the information given through my narration, “*the island is inhabited by people whose external appearance is almost identical and who are perfectly satisfied with this uniformity as well as their king*”. Within this imaginary context, the children trusted their own logic and tried to find the best way of approaching the given topic with the intention of identifying the problem, challenging the given social/power status, unveiling the injustice parameter given and providing various reasonable points of view to ensure, in their own words, a more human and objective deal through dialogic and embodied conversations (lines: 2, 6, 11). According to Boal (2003) and Greene (1995), when students are engaged in a dialogic exchange, they are more likely to take ownership and actively participate in interrogating the taken-for-granted; they are also more likely to create different visions of their social, cognitive, and physical life worlds.

In their engagement in perspective taking, a core element was that of empathy. The following extract illustrates various reasons for which the children empathised with various characters in the story.

❖ **Example (appendix:1, PC1:4.4)**

Antri: “Having observed all the characters making decisions and taking actions, whom would you support as being right? With whom would you empathise?”

Boy 1: *“I would say the family, both the father and the mother, because they were defending their right to live their lives happily with their child. They did not do anything bad, yet the king has accused them of disobeying their duties as citizens of that land.”*

Girl 1: *“Yes, I agree... I really felt sorry for them because the way the king treated them was really unfair. I think that he was acting in such a way because he didn't try to see their point of view. The only thing he ever cared about was his law and the extent to which the citizens followed it or not. In my opinion, this case should make him realise that his laws do not always function fairly to serve the people, as he was supposedly hoping for.”*

Boy 2: *““I am not sure whether the king was right at the beginning — I mean before finding out that the couple was raising a “different” child from the other citizens of the land. However, from the moment you introduced him to the story, all his actions and decisions showed his aim to be the one and only who holds the power and does whatever he wants, regardless of his subjects. On the other hand, the parents are devastated, but they try to defend themselves with dignity. The only thing I don't like about them is that although they seem determined, they haven't really made any drastic moves.”*

Girl 2: *“I find it difficult to say that the King was doing things for the benefit of his citizens. OK, his intention might have been to protect his subjects, but he was doing it in the wrong way. How could he ask the parents to drive away their child or to cut his ears off if they wanted to stay in his land? The land was*

not his; it belongs to all the people living there. Apart from the parents, I found myself sympathising more with the child because he could not change things for himself and his family and was dependent on the decisions of the adults. This unprotected child should be everyone's priority and not their inferiority complexes."

Another issue relates to a compelling argument put forward by Winston (1999), namely that the combination of logic and affective elements, which emanate through the *Forum Theatre*, inform moral thinking. To spark discussion among the members of the audience, I used the methods of freeze-framing and probing, while I was in fact laying the foundations for later interventions within the workshop (appendix:1, PC1:4.4). As shown from the reflection of children's contributions and their interviews that followed, this did challenge the children's thinking about matters related to their personal and social world (Beach & Myers, 2001). Posing and discussing responses to questions such as: "*How would you feel if you were in our shoes? What if you were a common parent and not a king? Would you live in exile or obey these inhuman rules?*" the children seemed willing to challenge the practical judgement and the king's inexorable approach and to demand justice on the basis of democracy and human relations (Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 2006). This desire for justice, as developed through their interactions in *Forum Theatre* appeared to trigger the children's thinking and activate their capacity to understand themselves as "*interconnected beings*". When asked to comment on their experiences (appendix:1, PC1: 4,4), the children stated:

Girl 1: *“The way we responded to the situations each time through our words or even our facial expressions predetermined the way our social relationship was developed. When, for example, those who assumed the role of the parents bowed before the king, asking him to show pity, it felt like they were weak and obedient to the king’s demands. On the other hand, in moments when some of us were arguing for the characters’ rights, that felt more powerful in terms of making a change, not only for them, but also for a community of people which is or may be in a similar position.”*

Girl 2: *“I really liked the moment when the king seemed confused about the possibility of being in the family’s position. It was interesting to see his reaction; this applied to all the various versions: there was always our shock facing the same option and the concern about how this may affect our lives.”*

These children, through the dramatic experience of *Forum Theatre*, were impressed by the way their classmates were immersed in their roles, which is evident in the way they reacted and responded towards each other in role, defending themselves and respecting their classmates’ opinions, regardless of whether they agreed or not. Within the framework of the story, they offered advice and comfort to the characters that suffered, expressed concern for the outcome of the story and faced various dilemmas. This may be interpreted as a mode of “recognition” (Nussbaum, 1997, p.10) – the awareness that individuals are not all the same, and they are directly and indirectly affected by those with whom they interact and by the context they are in. The various roles children

enacted or observed as spectators provided them with an outlet of expression that allowed them to examine different options, make decisions and gain insight into their (a) inner self, (b) their peers, and (c) their environment (Bhukhanwala, 2007; Boal, 2003, 2006; Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 2006).

❖ **Examples (appendix:1, PC1: 4,4):**

***Boy 1:** *“Through our actions as protagonists of the scenes in different roles we found ourselves in a difficult position because we had to defend ourselves against serious threats. For me this was strange because I always defend myself one way or another but here the pressure was too much; in the case of bullying, which the family suffered, I am not sure whether in real life I would react properly and keep my nerve. I found myself torn between someone who should think clearly about how to react, what to say or do and another very emotional self; it was so contradictory I started thinking of my real self in alternative ways.”*

Girl 1: *“Being in the role of a spectator was a unique experience for me, since I got to watch the play presented in front of me knowing that the only thing I could do was to guess the next scene. Here I was active in terms of having the opportunity to intervene when I considered it necessary and through this involvement I challenged my attitude towards certain issues. In fact this process got me thinking about my personality in terms of the way I think and react as a human.”*

Girl 2: *“Being in the role of a character, or even in that of a spectator, I felt strangely in terms of empathising with people such as my family, my friends, or even myself. I tried to imagine how these people think and feel and tried to understand the reasons behind their actions or their fears and insecurities. I realise that it is quite easy to judge somebody but if you put yourself in their shoes or listen and observe their life carefully, you will think twice before judging.”*

Boy 2: *“I think that our participation in this activity made us realise the connection of the story with our real lives. We could be those characters and we might live in an oppressive environment or society such as that in the story. I am not sure whether we could interrupt or change things as we did in the dramas but in a similar case we should definitely try to make decisions and take action for the improvement of our life.”*

The idea that drama can function as a political arena constructed to explore issues of value and social conflict (Boal 2003, 2006; Winston, 2004) and as a *“space of appearance”* (d’Entreves, 1994, p.77) for the constitution of their public identities (*ibid*) is not a new one. In this instance, the heroes function in a fictional context in which the king and the family discuss an issue that concerns them, hear speakers and are heard by them and react in various ways that can affect their lives. The issue of public identity is crucial here. These identities and, more specifically, the stereotypes connected to them were visibly challenged through other exchanges in this part of the drama; when, for example, the king

failed to convince the parents to follow his orders, he offered them money in order to arrange an operation to “fix” the child’s ears. This tempting proposal gave rise to controversy among the children-audience. Some of them believed that the parents should accept the offer because it would resolve the issue once and for all, allowing for everyone to live happily ever after; the child would become one of the citizens and nobody would bully him. Conversely, other children disagreed with this opinion, stressing the abuse of power against underprivileged people and the importance of fighting for the right to develop one’s own identity within a community, without being labelled as antagonists.

The above incident can correlate with Mouffe’s (2005) theory, according to which identity is a construct that exists in relation to other concepts. Our notion of collective identity, our “*self*” (p.13) only exists because it may be juxtaposed with the “*other*” (*ibid*). Still, Mouffe (2005) stresses that, far from being always antagonistic, this relationship can also be viewed as “*agonistic*” (p.16), which presupposes a healthy, or “*legitimate conflict*” (*ibid*). Elaborating on the possibility to “fix” the child’s ears, the children came to consider and reconsider the characters’ identities in terms of democracy. Some questions that arose were: what decision the couple should make; whether they should obey somebody just because they are the king no matter if this went against their statutory rights; what would happen if the child had an operation; what this meant for the king and the islanders and how the islanders would cope with the news of the parents’ rebellion or alternatively the possibility of forcing the family into exile.

Of course, it is a far more difficult task to take a rough stance on injustice and actually do something about it, rather than simply acknowledge the problem. Challenging the authorities as well as the norm, Boal (2003; 2006) argues, is no simple feat, but rather requires traits such as inner power, determination and commitment, characteristics that are much easier to portray in drama rather than in real life. Through *Forum Theatre*, this was particularly evident in the evaluations linked to the family's decision about whether they should go away because they decided to do so and not because other people forced them. The children who assumed the role of the couple were well aware of the dilemma in which they found themselves and expressed concern not only for themselves, but also for their co-islanders, regardless of their decision:

“This case does not only concern us. It concerns all the islanders! Regardless of our decision, this attitude will negatively affect life on the island. One day they will face similar challenges. Our life should not be shaped according to what everyone else thinks, nor should it be subject to the king's threats. This is not democracy. We have the power to do whatever we want.” “We have taken all the parameters into account. The right thing to do is to protect our family, without harming our child in any way” (girl playing the role of the parents; appendix:1, PC1:4.4).

These extracts are particularly enlightening because they helped cast light on the process of spotting specific critical thinking-related elements, such as self-awareness and self-determination. Through their playful actions or intentions for action, such as deciding to save the family as a group of human beings with

diverse identities, they are indicating a willingness to remove the darkness of oppression from their imaginatively created worlds and bring hope and determination over the challenges of diverse views and actions, social status and power. This is relevant to Mouffe's (1988) theory, according to which to perceive and apply democracy, one needs to revisit the concept of power from different perspectives to establish notions such as critical thinking and social equality and learn to accept whatever deviates from the norm as an integral part of the whole (*ibid*, p.226).

Accordingly, as shown in the above extracts, as well as responding to oppression and bullying and issues of powerlessness or privilege, the children were voicing alternatives and choices to societal problems and aspiring to the vision of a humane society. This might suggest a direction towards enhancing elements of critical thinking within the context of critical pedagogy — as explained in the literature review — for, children appeared to be positively disposed towards the expression of ideas and actions (regardless of whether this was in the imaginative context) that would allow them to see the world (which they were presented with and which they had to compare with the real one) as it is and to act accordingly by discerning certain kinds of inaccuracies, distortions, and even falsehoods.

In practice, however, not all children held the same views of harmony and societal peace reflected in the above-noted extract, in which only a number of children were involved. Other children stated that given the king's oppressive stance, a more dynamic approach, such as revenge or violence would be more

suitable – they proposed, for instance, killing him, harming his ears or his children. These statements offered a springboard for discussion on the consequences of such actions and the implications that pressure, oppression and strong emotional tension might have on our way of thinking and our (democratic) way of living in general. In addition, these statements were used to explore alternative ways of addressing how democratic values could underpin the social arena and human relationships and not to eliminate or increase the power of each one:

“I think that there was no point in taking revenge on the king because in that way the family would transform into the oppressor. For instance, somebody who is being bullied can easily transform into a bully himself. After all, the point is not to increase their power or decrease the power of the king; rather, it is to defend themselves and their rights and attempt to find solutions informed by democracy and not against it” (girl’s comments from PC1 – appendix:1, PC1:4.4).

For Mouffe (1996), allowing and supporting pluralism heralds an acknowledgement of power not as a deleterious effect but as a dynamic relation, which constitutes *“any social objectivity”* (p.247-248). Insofar as power is not a deleterious effect *“the main question of democratic politics then becomes not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power that are compatible with democratic values”* (ibid).

The implementation of *Forum Theatre* was intended to provide children with a safe space which promotes equality, and to encourage them to feel confident enough to voice their emotions. Indeed, as I noted in my diary on

01/03/2012, during a casual conversation we had after that workshop, the class teacher of PC1 reflected on the power that *Forum Theatre* had on the achievement of this goal by stating that the stimulus for the children's participation and cultivation of their thinking was the ability to draw on embodied and non-verbal expressions. They were being encouraged to function within a democratic context where all answers were valued and welcome, which allowed them to challenge their own thinking, their own emotions and spontaneity and helped them to communicate how they might deal with the oppression in question. This is in line with Clark's (1997) view that:

“[t]he biological brain takes all the help it can get. This help includes the use of external physical structures (both natural and artifactual), the use of language and cultural institutions, and the extensive use of other agents” (p.80).

On the other hand, although the oppression and the inequalities were perceivable and relevant to the children's views, additional scaffolding and open-ended activities were needed in order to provide children with opportunities to enhance their confidence and contribute to their learning by expressing themselves in divergent ways and challenge their thinking through various dialogical interactions with their classmates. In the next sections, I will provide some examples which are indicative of the extent to which these elements were promoted and worked out within the playful character of drama and the type of impact they had on the process of this project. Aiming to elaborate on the impact of playfulness and pleasure as a motivational tool for the enhancement of critical

thinking, I will now move on to the role of games as a motivational force and context provider and then on the use and impact of several drama conventions, as presented in the sections that follow.

5.6.1.4. Games as a motivational force and context provider (appendix:1, PC1:3.1b)

“Children need to feel comfortable in the classroom environment”, according to Kottler and Kottler (2001, p.124), who suggest that it is highly important for children to feel safe and to be encouraged to express themselves in playful and pleasurable settings. Such settings, they suggest, provide opportunities for enhancing the children’s self-esteem, confidence and willingness to participate actively in their own learning; it is here that children will make use of opportunities, take risks, make choices and decisions, employ their reason to argue in favour or against an idea while enjoying themselves along the way (*ibid*). These are all inextricable dispositional elements required for the cultivation and enhancement of critical thinking (Facione, 2000).

Winston and Tandy (2009) claim that *“things that happen in drama are playful”* (p.2). Far from implying that its value is eliminated in fun and joy, they highlight the importance of experiencing drama and the opportunities it provides to use games in order to *“explore, define and share the drama space”* (*ibid*, p.12) as well as to *“experiment with their bodies and voices within that space”* (*ibid*). It is this experience as a whole that I attempted to take advantage of while applying,

for example, the game¹¹ of the servant and the boss during the third workshop designed for PC1 (appendix:1, PC1: 3,1). This game took place at the beginning of the workshop for two main reasons: firstly, for the purpose of challenging the issue of power in terms of social class and secondly, so that it could be used as a framework of reference when preparing the development of identities in the context of *Forum Theatre*, a convention that followed this game. To this end, the children were encouraged to work in pairs and to alternate the roles of the servant and the boss using their bodies and voices so as to experiment with several ways in which these two identified characters interact as human beings, what the connotations of these identities are and what values underpin them.

According to Foucault (1997, p.168), when the participants play a game – such as this noted above – they should be encouraged to modify the rules of an “agonic” (*ibid*) game of freedom, precisely because they are free to speak and act differently. This happens on a dual level: not only within the fictitious reality that they create and live but also in the drama lesson itself, where they have the opportunity to affect – to a degree – its course through the choices they make. Linked to this premise was my attempt to identify and elaborate on evidence of critical thinking by examining the way the children justified their decisions to

¹¹I asked the children to walk around the space casually. Then, I asked them to form groups of two by using the “Huggy” game (they had to walk around and stop to hug a specified number of people). One of them was to take on the role of the master and the other that of the servant. The former could arbitrarily command the latter to perform various tasks. Emphasis was given on the clarity of the instructions that the master should give the servant (e.g. jump up and down ten times). Then they swapped roles. A class discussion followed about feelings related to the above roles (whether they enjoyed the activity, which role they enjoyed and why and what their thoughts were on the roles of the boss and servants, symbolically or in real life).

develop those identities as well as their actual performance, and whether this reflected stereotypes or different alternatives.

The children's presentations and the comments that followed revealed that half of the children used stereotypes to accommodate their story/scenario in terms of the attitude of the boss towards the servant. In specific, in these versions, the boss was portrayed as an inflexible master whose orders were as irrational as they were impossible to execute, as the following example illustrates: *"This is not my day and that's your fault, because you were the first person I saw as soon as I got up. For this reason, I order you to clean the whole house; after you are done, you shall spend the day standing on one foot."* Conversely, the rest of the children experimented with alternative approaches: a polite boss who spends time with the servant, for instance playing football; a very lazy, rude servant who constantly creates problems on purpose; an obedient servant who respects his kind boss. These variations depict Foucault's (1997) perspective of human activities as "agonic" (p.168) games and the need for "agonic" (*ibid*) activity, in which players struggle to modify the rules of the game by what they do and how they do it and in this way also modify their identities.

The children's representations of these personas are not further analysed as representations; instead, they are assessed as a context for the children's argumentation beyond their choices, in relation to their lives, their own personalities, as well as the personalities they wanted to assume. In my question whether they preferred the role of the servant or the boss, there was no noteworthy preference for the one character over the other. However, it appears that they

either identified with the role they assumed or discerned similarities to their own character in terms of specific traits (appendix:1, PC1:3,1b), as is evident in the examples that follow:

❖ **Examples (appendix:1, PC1:3,1b):**

(1) Girl 1: *“I am not sure what I would like to be... Hmm... I think that the role of a boss would give me an interesting point of view, however, I feel safer in the role of the servant... I think this is because I can relate to a situation in which I have to follow orders without having a choice; it’s what happens in my family. I think that even if I took the role of the boss, I would not be able to support it because I lack the makings of a boss.”*

(2) Boy 1: *“I would like to be given the role of the boss, because it will be a nice change: back home I always have to do what my parents ask me to do, like clean my room, bring them water, etc.”*

(3) Girl 2: *“Well, it depends... If you are a servant, that does not mean that you are inferior... If your boss respects you and values democracy, your relationship will be fine. On the other hand, as a boss I would definitely have the power to do whatever I wanted; of course, I would need to remember that this person, the servant, is there to make my life easier, so I would have to respect him/her.”*

(4) Boy 2: *“I want to be neither a boss nor a servant in the sense that most of the kids presented them! I don’t think it’s fair to take advantage of other people or to*

obey someone's desires if he/she does not respect you. I like equality. We all have the same rights regardless of our social class and position."

In the above extracts the children expressed their preferences in terms of selecting the role with which they felt more familiar. Some of them did so being open-minded and fair-minded and thinking independently, since they approached the issue globally; others (1, 2) made their statements only on the basis of their own perspectives and experiences. The challenge of these issues provided the platform for more thoughtful considerations on which the *Forum Theatre* noted above was based. In no way, as stated earlier, was the use of games intended to enhance any type of critical thinking on its own; rather, it aimed to provide a motivational framework within which the children could develop their thinking in a process which is first and foremost playful and pleasurable. This setting was intended to encourage them to release their energy, connect with others, practise the rules of social encounter (Winston, 2000, p.101) and feel confident and motivated to participate energetically using their bodies and minds, not only in the games themselves, but also in the activities that followed.

5.6.1.5. "Defining space" as a Stimulus for Making Choices and Decisions (appendix:1, PC1:4.5)

A characteristic of critical thinkers in relation to their role as citizens and active political beings is the capacity to make a choice freely and be responsible

for that choice, consider its context, accept its implications and consequences and be able to argue for it (Castoriadis, 1997). Engle and Ochoa (1988) underline that this dimension of freedom and choice is central when considering citizenship and democracy as a system that is contingent with the actions of people who are members of that system. It is these elements of choice, freedom and responsibility that I strove to enhance through various activities in order to give the children the voice and the space to cultivate habits of the mind such as the willingness to engage in social matters, either in role or out of role (Neelands & Goode, 1990, p.13).

Our work in the third workshop illustrates how the notions noted above – freedom, choice, democracy – influenced the participants. The space where the workshop took place was separated into two by an imaginary diagonal line. First, the children were asked to spatially declare their allegiance: if they agreed with the king, voted for uniformity and rejected diversity, they had to stand on one side, where the palace lay. If they chose to rebel against the status quo and defend the family's right to adopt a different child, they had to stand on the other side, where their imaginary house stood. Finally, there was also an area in the middle for the children who were unsure as to which side to support, while everybody was free to change their minds after hearing the argumentation of the other participants.

Once children decided where to stand, they were asked to provide reasonable arguments for their decisions. A boy who positioned himself very close to the king's palace explained: *"He is the king and we should follow his rules. As citizens we know that he always does the right thing for his people and*

although his stance on this issue is indeed strict, I don't think it's because he hates the family; rather, it's because he needs to protect the law and order and protect his people from a strange human being that may cause problems at one point or another." Another boy agreed: *"The king doesn't seem to want to harm this family. He only asked the family to opt for an operation so the child's ears would look more human. He did that to establish harmony and sameness, which are elements that bring people together."* At the other end of the line stood a girl who explained that she was there *"[...] because the king needs to reflect upon his laws and the humanistic element that they involve – if they involve such a thing – and then enforce them. People change and the same should apply for laws. I support the family in their attempt to keep their child without having to negotiate or compromise."* In the same vein, another girl stated: *"The fact that the family is poor and weak compared to the king does not mean that they do not have human rights. In this case, their human rights are violated and it is their actions and their voice that can make a difference."* A girl who stood somewhere in the middle commented: *"It is important for both of them to defend their rights and positions. On the one hand, it is a shame to send a family into exile because one of its members is different but it might be better for them, because their life in the new place might be happier. On the other hand, I don't agree with the king's tactics but I can understand that he may fear his people's anger or complaints."* A boy who also stood in the middle stated: *"I don't know where to go because in both cases there will be uprisings if the two parties don't agree."* When I asked him to elaborate on his argument he said: *"The ideal solution is to address problems in a*

democratic way. However, when the issue is one of power struggle, someone may employ violent means that may harm not only their opponents, but also themselves and the other citizens.”

The incident noted above is used here as an analysis of a moment of critical thinking: the citizens are confronted with an unexpected approach by their king and the issue of diversity and are called upon to react through a critical analysis and to take the responsibility of their decisions and choices. It is important to note that their reactions were guided by their critical dispositions and background knowledge. The extent to which they were open-minded, fair-minded, and independent minded was important here. Also noteworthy was their willingness to consider their classmates’ positions, evaluate and compare them with their own views and maybe reconsider and modify their stance (Moon, 2007). Indeed, some children changed their minds, because, as they explained later, through this activity they found out that certain arguments provided by their classmates were more solid and more convincing than their own. For example, one of the boys stated at first that the parents should listen to the king, because all of them were in danger; in case they wanted to keep the child, they had to leave for their own good. This very boy later changed his mind and decided to support the family, because, as he said: *“Even if the king is powerful, he cannot force anyone to do something, especially people who are willing to fight for their rights and do not just accept their fate”* (appendix:1, PC1:4.5). Thus, the way the children were intrigued to use the space and allow themselves the possibility to change their mind seemed to provide them with a stimulus to employ a more critical stance

towards the information provided, assess incidents objectively and make a decision that takes into consideration all the relevant parameters, which derived from a critical problematisation. Papastephanou and Angeli (2007) might read these approaches and specifically, this extent of problematisation, as an enhancement of the movements towards the cultivation of critical thinking. For, as they state:

“Problematization derives from an aporetic dimension of thinking that thematizes what is usually taken for granted in a social context. To be critical is not simply, or solely, to evaluate means or decisions but to question — not necessarily in a negative or dismissive sense — consolidated criteria, practices and idea(l)s. It is also to bring hidden aspects to the fore, to accommodate reflectively the new and the unknown (Lyotard). To be critical means first and foremost to be imaginative of alternative realities and thoughtful about their possible value or non-value” (p.612).

As shown in the extracts above, I sought to focus my pedagogy on the quality of the children’s argumentations underlying their views, rather than the correctness of their answer or the simple recall of taught information (Lewis & Smith, 1993; Moss & Koziol, 1991). What is more, perhaps the most significant proof of critical thinking mechanisms on behalf of the children was the process of justifying, reconsidering and modifying their stance according to the thematic framework within which they had to operate (Papastephanou, 2006).

5.6.1.6. Aesthetic Experience and Improvisations (appendix:1, PC1:6.3)

In the last workshop conducted with PC1, I encouraged children to work in groups in order to consider, analyse and synthesise all the incidents that occurred in the story up to that point, evaluate the characters' positions and suggest a possible ending for the story that they considered to be socially fair for them and the characters. To do this, they had to imagine possibilities and actualities and to challenge what Mary Warnock (1978) calls “*what is not*” (p.74) or what may not be considered in the restricted frameworks of people's realities. According to her, imagination is the basis of people's autonomy and freedom, as it allows them to freely envision different worlds from the one they experience as well as to plan and to act towards its realisation once they choose to do so. This imparts a source of pleasure, a prerequisite not only for the artistic approaches of working but, more importantly, for gaining a role and power in the context of learning. It is the pleasure of power they can get, not in exercising power over other people, but from organising their environment to make it intelligible, meaningful and in which they are fully competent (*ibid*). In Warnock's (1978) words:

“We can pretend. We can think ahead. We can treat one thing as symbol of another and use the symbol to illuminate and increase as well as to express our insight. In all these ways, we can increase our power over the environment, our sense of being able to control it, to use it, to do what we want, to understand our position in it and explain that understanding to others. This is one of the deepest pleasures towards which education is

directed” (p.80).

The approach applied here aspired to a free and collective use of the children’s imagination so as to encourage them to be more open-minded and reflective-minded when talking to their groups and exchanging ideas about the alternative versions of the story’s endings. Once they made their decisions, the children worked artistically by employing the theatrical code to enact various realities and to share their ideas through the symbolic transformation of their presence, time, space and the symbolic use of sounds, lights and objects such as different patterns of clothing, coloured papers, wooden sticks and coloured pens and markers (Neelands, 2003; Nicholson, 2005). As shown in the four examples below (appendix:1: PC1:6.3), the children expressed their opinions through dialogue. Conversely, some groups chose to illustrate their ideas by mainly using actions: gestures and movements in particular. This response finds its place in James Thompson’s (2003) argument that in applied drama students have opportunities to draw upon familiar ways of responding such as the bodily memories that each of them carry, *“starting [thus] from and playing with the rich, dynamic and changing action matter that makes up their lives”* (*ibid*, p.55); that is, *“a series of received ‘bits of behaviour’, mediated cognitive/affective responses, learnt scripts, tried and tested shrugs, practised movements, hardwired outbursts and controlled performances”* (*ibid*, p.60).

❖ **Examples (appendix:1: PC1:6.3):**

❖ **Example 1:**

The scenario of this group portrayed the family moving to a different

island; there, people were kind, friendly and each had unique characteristics, which differentiated them from the rest. Aside from being frowned upon and considered unsightly on their own island, such characteristics would pose obstacles in their everyday life. To portray this scenario, this group created paper body parts and faces, such as cat's eyes, a beak and a wooden nose to show empathy with the child and to pass the message that diversity need not separate human beings. At the beginning of their improvisations, the students formed a circle with their bodies turning to the other participants-audience to show their faces and then, with their bodies, they shaped the word «ίσοι» [isi], Greek for “equal”, and the following lines were said:

Child: *“Oh! Look at the people here! They have something strange on them, just like me! But they look so happy! I think we will be able to live with them peacefully”.*

Mother: *“What’s important is that we left from a place where people did not know what equality or respect means. This is a new beginning. We can make it! If we managed to stand up to the oppression on our island, we will fight for our rights anywhere.”*

Father: *“It seems that we made the right decision by moving. We tried, but nobody was willing to show even the slightest sign of compassion. Our child is safe here!”*

According to this scenario, the family lived happily ever after, having finally found an equal place in society in a new land and among new friends,

neighbours, colleagues and co-citizens.

❖ **Example 2:**

One of the groups decided that the characters should stay on the island and try to defend their statutory rights as equal citizens. They thought of exposing their problem on a popular TV talk show, which was supposed to review the family's life and the conflict with the king and other citizens as well as open up a possibility for dialogue and reconsideration of the issue of racism. The TV host introduced the case as follows:

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen! Today our topic is both exciting and heart-breaking! A family living on our island is currently facing social rejection and exile decided by the king. The king has ordered the family to leave our land because the parents decided to adopt a child who looks different from us. Nothing like this has ever happened before, which makes this a very sensitive and difficult issue to tackle. What is more, this family is well-known all over the island for their kindness, and contributions to the island, and always lived harmoniously with the other islanders. Will we allow this exile, reject them or bully them? What if one of us were in their place?”

The group used their bodies to show the family's past in a series of flashbacks; first, they showed the couple living alone without the child, then the adoption, and the people's attitude towards them as soon as they found out. They

then showed a clip against racism in which the protagonists were the child, the king, the parents and their fellow citizens. The clip conveyed messages of acceptance and cohesion even though the way the group presented it was comical, as it involved elements of satire manifested either in their movements or their words. For example, the children presented the king as having the same ears as the child of the story and being treated as an animal. The other people made fun of him, which led him to futile attempts to conceal the ears out of fear that this might lead him to exile and dethronement. Interestingly, he thought that it was unfair to be treated in this way because of his ears. Another example presents the king being the same as his fellow citizens and making declarations of equality; but every time he did so, he had visions of the child and his nose grew bigger and bigger, which alludes to Pinocchio's story. The people suspected that something was wrong with their king and began to scrutinise his laws and actions. The video clip ended with the message: "People on this island are equal citizens and embrace diversity."

❖ **Example 3:**

This group used props to create the king's bedroom. The child who played the role of the king pretended to be having a nightmare related to the family's exile; due to his inhumane stance, he would henceforth be tortured by guilt and disturbing visions of the family as well as islanders who employed a more flexible attitude and went against the king. Finally, the king realises the consequences of his decision and calls upon the islanders to bring the family back.

❖ **Example 4:**

This group showed the family moving to a place where people share the same characteristics as their child. In this place, people are warm and kind and do not care about other people's differences. Because the family did not know what they would encounter, they wore fake ears, to look like their child and thus protect him from bullying. Surprisingly, they were well received in this community. One day strong winds caused their ears to come off, ironically rendering the parents different from the rest; far from rejecting them, the locals reassured them that diversity was a welcome element in that particular society.

Reflecting on these examples, it is evident that some of the children's performances and responses (examples: 1, 2, 4) reveal the utopian potential of the stories or the fairy tale and fantasy as Zipes (1995) explains when referring to Bloch's theory. This is because the children's ideas indicated the need of their characters to be free and autonomous and to make decisions that "*corrected*" (Bloch cited in Zipes, 1995, p.138) their destiny. Through their improvisations, they suggested how they wanted to change the imaginary framework they were enacting these roles in and to transform it accordingly. Bloch states that children's stories and especially fairy tales are seen as indicators of actions as they parallel the processes through which humans use reason to fulfil the wishes of fantasy while they enclose "*a corrective*" (*ibid*) element, since the utopian perspective seems to be a critical reflection of the everyday and discloses the capacity for autonomy and political thinking (*ibid*).

As in Boal's *Forum Theatre* approach described above, Bloch sees dissatisfaction as a condition to be overcome; at the same time he further adds that it is dissatisfaction that can spark the utopian instinct (*ibid*). This idea is connected with Prendergast's (2011) claim that in drama it is the imaginative living in dystopias that stimulates imaginative living in utopias. It is this dystopia and the feeling of dissatisfaction that children had while empathising with the ill-fated family; the inhospitable island made them consider and propose their utopian visions for a happier world for these characters. For Bloch, building concrete utopias is possible through the recovery of autonomy, which can be reawakened through the fairy tales' estrangement of participants from the everyday as it is combined with dreams and wishes (Zipes, 1995, p.138-139). Through fiction, the children were able to bring wishful projections to life through their own powers and actions and to give their characters the possibility of a better life and the chance to defend their rights and to make anew their "*storied-lives*" (*ibid*) either on the island or anywhere else they could live as equal human beings happily. This is reflected in the words of one of the participants:

"I really liked the fact that the family made the decision to go somewhere else to live because their facial expressions and the way they moved showed that they were happy in the new place. After all, the most important thing is to do what makes you happy. Their choice to go away, to make use of their freedom and fight for their rights showed that they put their family above all and that they would take any necessary and ethical step in order to save their dignity and at the same time start a new

happy life” (girl from PC1, interviewed on 24/03/2012).

Most of the children’s projections presented above were mainly creative and imaginable, covering certain skills of critical thinking such as that of imagining possibilities, making decisions and acting towards solving a problem. Be that as it may, as it is noted in the literature review, for one to be considered a critical thinker and actually solve given problems by thinking critically, it takes more than merely striving to find a range of alternatives and meaningful connections (Treffinger *et al.*, 2006). Based on these premises, I aimed at utilising the children’s performances as a context for reflection, where their own considerations and choices were the focus; this provided the grounds for examining possibilities carefully and constructively by organising and analysing possibilities to later refine and develop the most promising ones, and ranking or prioritising and choosing certain options (*ibid*). Finally, with the aim of placing emphasis on real-life application of some of the concepts promoted through the workshops, upon completion of the performances, I encouraged the children to assess the proposed scenarios based on the validity of their argumentation and on their applicability to real life.

Below are selected examples of what the children said as regards the scenarios:

❖ **Examples (appendix:1, PC1:6.4):**

Boy 1: *“I think that the scenario in which the family goes to a different place is good, because in this particular alternative everybody was the same and people*

were kind and welcomed diversity. Still, there is a high risk factor to consider: if the place is not ready to welcome the 'other', for instance people from different countries, with different abilities, skin colour or other physical features and if the people there are not educated and cannot appreciate the importance of diversity, this experience can turn into another nightmare... This is not to say that people's approach will be identical to that of the king or the clergy in our original story, but still, there is no guarantee of what conditions they will have to cope with at the new place."

Girl 1: "The scenario in which the family goes to a different place to live is quite realistic because it is very probable in real life for people who are oppressed for political, economic, cultural or social reasons to decide to go away in order to find a better life. At least, this is what they hope for. If they are lucky enough, they will be accepted in the new community at once. If not, it is up to them to face the challenge and prove that they are worthy. If they are not satisfied, they can always leave in search of a place where they are content. This is what my family did when they left Romania and came to Cyprus. Things were not easy at first and they still face difficulties but at least here we feel safer here than in any of the other places we tried to go."

Girl 2: "I really like the idea which involves the media because they are one of the most popular and successful ways of projecting social issues and can change people's way of thinking. The videos our classmates showed communicated a lot

of messages related to the role, the consequences and the impact of bullying. There are many campaigns running through the media and I think that through them people are given the opportunity to consider issues that otherwise they would ignore or take for granted. These campaigns and the way journalists present an issue not only sensitise people and urge them to think, but also remind powerful people that they don't have the right to abuse their power and that they should consider the consequences of their actions, especially when they affect people's lives."

Boy 2: *"I preferred the idea of staying put and employing all the possible ways of solving problems rather than running away. I know that this is a difficult choice to make, especially when most people don't realise how much injustice there is, but if they do not act, nothing will ever change, not only for them but also for their fellow citizens. The use of the media reminded me of our response to Forum Theatre. This might be more successful since many people watch TV programmes to be informed of current affairs and evaluate situations and people. As for the king or similar powerful men, such as presidents or principals, they should definitely be affected by the way the media approach the issue and the possible impact of such exposure. This will probably make them reconsider their actions; sadly, they may not do so out of remorse, but merely to save their reputation."*

Girl 3: *"I like the fact that the king acknowledged his mistake after his dream. However, I'm not sure a real person could be affected by a dream. This reminds*

me of the case of Pontius Pilate, when his wife had a dream about Jesus Christ. Not everyone takes their dreams seriously nor do they care about media exposure. Instead of acknowledging their errors, they may selfishly become cruel.”

The extracts listed above reveal the children’s willingness to analyse, synthesise and evaluate all the scenarios in order to choose the best option among those they were presented with. To me, their stance can be interpreted as evidence of critical thinking since all their arguments were explained and documented based on their logic and the connections they could make about the validity and impact of their opinion as related to what they had just witnessed. The link with their own experiences in some cases and the spherical approach were also evidence that the children really tried to focus on the issue in question and be as objective as possible in order not only to support the idea they believed is more accurate but also, to express their willingness to try and resolve in an open-ended problem and offer considered opinions based upon what they had seen and heard from their peers.

Regarding the second example presented above, it was interesting to note the children’s choice of comic elements and satire in order to convey meanings of injustice. This was also proof of their reflective thought, creativity, freedom of choice and willingness to create a reasonable argument in an alternative way, as they were allowed to do. A core element here was that this group interaction allowed them to make aesthetic choices through a quite sophisticated use of the medium. As the children of this group stated in their interviews, this aesthetic

approach, which involved the use of humour-comic and satire was not accidental, as their objective was not to entertain the audience or make their performances pleasant but to project their views, bring about change as well as challenge the concepts of citizenship, social power and equality in an alternative way. While drawing parallels between the drama and a satirical TV programme, a member of this group stated:

“We tried to do something similar to that programme, because those actors make us laugh; however, their focus is to present in a creative and entertaining way the Cypriot society. Similarly, we used parody and exaggeration at some points in order to sensitise our audience to their role and power as equal citizens as in the context of the story in a more indirect way than telling them straight away what we considered right or wrong” (boy from PC1, interviewed on 24/03/2012).

Another member of the group noted:

“Our point was to use a rather alternative way to show diversity and oppression: by using satire as a medium, we aimed to attract the attention of our audience, shock them while at the same time making them laugh, and engaging them in our presentation. Sometimes we used simple and honest words, but with innuendos, so they were perceived by the audience in a different way” (girl from PC1, interviewed on 24/03/2012).

According to McDonald (2013), historically, humour has been employed to peacefully challenge authority, rebel against injustice and correct socially

unacceptable norms. Still, McDonald (2013) argues, it is often misconstrued as entertaining or inappropriate, even ridiculous, so much so that people dismiss it as an ineffective means for critical discourse. Here, the audience's reactions towards the comic performance through laughter was indicative of unconscious spontaneous positioning of themselves towards that situation, ridiculing the king's authoritarianism and most of the citizens' decisions and stances. This is in accordance with Duncan's (1962, p.187) argument that humour is another way of correcting social errors; by laughing and mocking as it were, we feel superior to others and feel as if we are disciplining them – as Meyer (2000) puts it, humour establishes a connection between the communicators and the audience, because it makes them sound and appear more credible. Other functions of humour are related to explaining a viewpoint, and the objective of critically approaching a particular situation. Lastly, humour is also used to make comparisons between individuals.

In the context of this research, humour can be seen as a means of psychological discharge, and a way of encouraging children's engagement of both their emotions and minds; as Gruner (1997) states, laughter can act as a back side of thinking. To enhance children's ability to laugh and enhance their sense of humour means to reinforce their intellectual forces and provide them with opportunities to think and see the world in divergent ways. As he further explains, cognition, motivation and pleasure are interrelated since thinking activation without motivation is not sustainable, and neither is motivation without enjoyment.

Elaborating on these children's responses as observed in the drama classes by me and their teachers, this kind of motivation lay the foundations for problem solving and importantly, open-ended problem solving. In what this means, the children were encouraged to contribute and take advantage of several open-ended opportunities to solve a problem as actors in a given context, i.e. the role-playing context of the above-presented activity, with the intention of trying various approaches and observe reactions by the audience. What is more, as members of the audience, they were urged to attempt to use their mind to make sense of a "solution", as well as their emotions and body to react to a given situation. As noted in my journal on 16/12/2011, my decision to experiment and challenge their ideas within an open-ended framework did not mean lowering expectations in any sense; rather, it was suggested as motivation to employ their creativity and imagination and allow freedom to imagine, present possibilities and alternatives, as stated in the example above. As such, this process might be read from Halpern (1996) and Moon (2007) as an attempt to develop motivational dispositions that allow a movement towards the enhancement of critical thinking skills, attitudes and stances.

5.7. Second Unit of Analysis: Working with PC2

5.7.1. *Mantle of the Expert* (appendix:2, PC2)

*Mantle of the Expert*¹² was the basic convention as “a drama-inquiry approach to teaching and learning” (Padget, 2012, p.104) applied in the workshops designed for PC2. It was selected because it is based on the premise that children learn best if they feel like experts in particular fields rather than simple students who are invited to participate in tasks. In this way, through purposeful dramatic frameworks, they are empowered to release and apply essential skills for critical thinking, namely taking responsibility, questioning, negotiating, collaborating to find solutions to problems, compromising in the “service” (Heathcote *et al.*, 1984, p.vii-x) of something greater than themselves – the community – and creating their own path through learning (ibid). Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explain:

“Participants in mantle of the expert are framed as servicers committed to an enterprise. This frame fundamentally affects their relationship with knowledge. They can never be mere receivers “told” about knowledge. They can only engage with it as people with a responsibility. This responsibility is not to knowledge itself, although, paradoxically, that is what the students are indirectly acquiring, but to the enterprise they have

¹² The *Mantle of the Expert* is a children-centred approach to teaching and learning based on dramatic-inquiry and invented and developed by Professor Dorothy Heathcote in the 1980's. According to this approach, children work as competent co-constructors of learning on several themes and in various drama contexts as if they are an imagined group of experts with particular identities (social behaviours), points of view and duties similar to those of real experts (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

undertaken. Knowledge becomes information, evidence, source material, specification, records, guidelines, regulations, theories, formulas, and artefacts, all of which are to be interrogated. This is an active, urgent, purposeful view of learning, in which knowledge is to be operated on, not merely taken in” (p.32).

As experts, children took on the role of detectives, individuals who had a degree of knowledge and understanding in an area, but who needed to work on the problem with their peers to develop additional skills required to solve the case of a child’s disappearance or kidnapping. Acting in the capacity of criminologists, psychologists, sociologists and policemen seemed to influence their participation in the workshops in positive ways; it appeared that they took themselves seriously, assumed responsibilities related to their field and attempted to make reasonable inferences and arguments. According to Rogoff (1990), the use of expertise thinking – such as that promoted by the *Mantle of the Expert* here – enables children to deep-plan and to use multitasking strategies in problem solving rather than having them find a best-fit strategy to solve an area of inquiry. The way this was promoted is noted below:

Assuming the role of the chief of detectives, I introduced the children to the task at hand:

“As you know, ladies and gentlemen, you have all been specially chosen for your very particular expertise in the field of investigation. Let me refresh your memories with regard to a very serious case we are called upon to solve: the case of Agapi’s disappearance or kidnapping. The only

information we have is that the little girl was last seen in a local park, on Tuesday afternoon around 2 o' clock, shortly after school. Our officers have retrieved a hair band and school bag believed to be hers. Her parents believe that it is a case of kidnapping; however, we need to examine all possibilities and look at this issue from all angles" (appendix:2, PC2:1.3).

After dividing the students into groups of four (appendix:2, PC2:1.4), I provided them with time for private deliberation based on various objects (the girl's bag, a doll, drawings that her parents gave the police, her notebooks and a diary) before presenting their findings to the class. The groups found out from Agapi's diary and drawings that she had recently met an adult friend, whom she was secretly meeting regularly. By thoroughly examining her bag, they found blood and hairs belonging to Agapi, while the doll carried a note that read "*from a friend to a special girl*". The children presented their findings to the class while being encouraged to be open-minded and reflective minded when referring to the case:

❖ **Example (appendix:2, PC2:1.5):**

Antri: "*So, what do you think about the evidence found regarding our case?*"

Girl 1: "*From her paintings, it seems that Agapi visited this park quite often to see this friend of hers. The question is who this friend is and why her parents know nothing about him.*"

Boy 1: "*My concern is that the girl was probably neglected by her parents. She is*

just a child and the fact that her parents ignore important details of her life is very suspicious.”

Boy 2: *“There was blood on her hair band, inside her bag and on the ground where we found the bag. Does this mean that somebody harmed the girl and kidnapped her?”*

Girl 2: *“There is no reason to jump to conclusions... There was some blood but this may mean that the girl had an accident and somebody took her to the hospital.”*

Girl 3: *“And why did her parents know nothing about it? If she were admitted to a hospital, somebody would inform her parents about it.”*

Boy 3: *“Maybe something bad happened to the girl, like an accident and perhaps she didn’t want to share it with her parents, since it wouldn’t be the first time they ignore her... We need to find out whether somebody, a friend, a neighbour, or a relative knows something more.”*

In this episode, the children were encouraged to make as many hypotheses as they could in order to link the evidence with possible scenarios about the way Agapi disappeared. This meant using their imagination in order to think of alternative scenarios on the basis of which they could synthesise the evidence with facts and other information for the purposes of solving the problem under investigation. Work was shared amongst smaller groups of children who,

acting as special detectives, oversaw matters which fell within their jurisdiction and were dependent on one another to accomplish their mission, whilst knowledge was constructed and sought through collaborative work. Elements such as continual and extended dialogue in combination with the willingness to listen to different opinions, challenge ideas, look for evidence, draw inferences and create favourable conditions for the development of critical thinking prospects (Lipman, 2003, p.20) were all consciously planned into this process in my scheme.

The dynamics created here when the groups of children worked together, blending their ideas and strengths, could be associated with what Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins (2002) call “*synergy*” (p.30), in other words, the collective energy of the group through dialogue and other forms of interaction which is by far superior to the energy of an individual. Hopkins *et al.* (2002) propose that this social model of learning promotes positive energy through a sense of connection, greater motivation, and positive feeling through cooperation, increases children’s self-esteem, confidence, social skills and develops their possibility thinking: all inextricable elements of critical thinking. Hertz-Lazarowitz and Miller (1992) extend this argument further by claiming that peer collaboration at all stages, as the *Mantle of the Expert* requires, results in equal ownership and equality while it also provides the stimulus for greater quality work: “*The students provide an audience for one another, generate details, locate promising topics, and provide each other with moral support*” (*ibid*, p.28).

A basic premise that the children learnt to accept was that they should not readily jump to conclusions based on the evidence, but remember that appearances

can be deceiving. It was clear that they should follow a process in order to make sense of the case given and to be able to provide Agapi's parents and the social media with accurate information. For this reason, they were invited to form new groups of research as general detectives and build on their previous hypothesis by visualising alternative ways in which Agapi might have disappeared and then evaluate their credibility. With this end in view, I encouraged them to create a show using still images of Agapi that they themselves had to act out. It was entirely up to them to decide on the background and content, be it places or other people that participated in these images. This was a task the children really enjoyed because the notion of visualisation is one that is typically used in crime series or horror films they had watched on TV or at the cinema. According to Vygotsky's (1998, p.28) relevant work on sociocultural role of pretend play and its consideration as "*self education*" (*ibid*), to make a complicated imaginary play come to life, a long and hierarchical system of meanings needs to be built, both in the children's minds and in reality; and it is this deep process that makes role-play a promising activity for learning. The examples that follow show the process the children-participants demonstrated to make their own contributions to the ways the scenario was developed:

❖ **Examples (appendix:2, PC2:2-3.6):**

Group no.1:

The girl is playing in the park with her friends when a man called Mr Xenarides appears with a dog. He is in fact the adult whom the children identified as Agapi's secret friend, as shown in the pictures the group of detectives collected. The dog

approaches Agapi and she happily pets it. On the dog's collar there is a note, which instructs her to meet the dog's owner, Mr Xenarides, who wants to give her something; the condition is that she has to wait until her friends leave. Agapi does as she is told and the man offers her a gift. Ecstatic with joy, she jumps up and down, but accidentally slips and falls. She breaks her tooth and Mr Xenarides offers to take her to the dentist. They leave in a hurry and forget a few things in the park.

Group no.2:

Mr Xenarides follows Agapi after school. As soon as she reaches her house, which is adjacent to the park, he stops her and orders her to go with him. The girl refuses to do so, but he takes her with him by force. Agapi fights back and her belongings fall to the ground, but it is all in vain; the man's physical strength is by far superior. He drags her by the hair, thus the blood on her hair band.

Group no.3:

That morning Agapi said goodbye to her mother and headed to school. She walked through the park as she always did, and stopped to smell some beautiful flowers. That is when Mr Xenarides appeared in front of her, claiming that his daughter (he was holding a photo of her) wanted to meet her. Agapi was skeptical at first, but the idea of playing with the girl and her toys was too tempting to turn down. Agapi followed the man and has been missing ever since.

Group no.4:

Mr Xenarides' accomplice follows Agapi on her way home and pushes her forcefully, before he disappears in the distance. She falls down and scratches her hand, and sees that her knee is bleeding. Mr Xenarides, who "happens" to be nearby, comes to her rescue. While he is helping her up, the accomplice blindfolds her and together they abduct her.

While recording the groups' hypotheses, it was interesting to note that, when developing their ideas, they all had taken into account the evidence given and formed images as a kind of initial step towards the analysis and synthesis of the case. Taking advantage of their curiosity, sparked by the plot of the story, they created opportunities to experience the tension themselves, explore possibilities and be playful in inventing creative ideas by "*examining issues that might otherwise remain abstract and inaccessible*" (Neelands, 1984, p.25). Once again, the context involved components of creativity, such as open-mindedness and flexibility, indispensable motivational tools for the enhancement of critical thinking and evidence of critical thinking attitudes. As stated in the literature review, these elements cannot be separated, especially within drama contexts; according to Paul and Elder (2006), "*critical thinking without creativity reduces to mere scepticism and negativity, and creativity without critical thought reduces to mere novelty*" (p.35).

The children used their bodies as aesthetic tools to represent possibilities and communicate meanings through their protagonists' actions and interactions,

thus promoting an alternative type of dialogue in a way that allowed them to directly relate to issues that concerned their roles as detectives (Boal, 1985; Campbell, 1994). Similarly, Boal (1985) explains that image work is useful as it allows children to explore abstract concepts such as relationships, emotions and thoughts and to express ideas, attitudes and realistic situations that are still in a forming process. Once the images and their connotations are communicated in the auditorium, the participants are transformed into a theatrical community of inquiry which envisages whatever is presented as a common stimulus for challenging their thinking. This is because these images no longer belong to the group, to a particular group or to a particular individual but to the whole class-auditorium, an active, critically thinking audience invited to view various concepts and decide upon possibilities and alternatives. This was also evident in the children's and their teacher's comments when I asked them to discuss the above-noted scenarios presented by the groups (appendix:2, PC2:2-3.6):

❖ **Examples (appendix:2, PC2:2-3.6):**

Boy 1: *"It was interesting to see that despite having little information and thinking that everyone would probably present similar ideas, we actually used our imagination and came up with many different alternatives. It was a nice surprise to see so many ideas from the groups and to realise that we should take them all into account if we wanted to solve the problem as professional detectives."*

Girl 1: *"The fact that our classmates understood the scenarios we had in mind*

just by looking at our movements, gestures and facial expressions was quite impressive. I think that we all liked the activity because our classmates had to guess what we were presenting and some of them, although they got the point, actually took our concept a step further. When, for example, Mr Xenarides showed the photo to Agapi, one of our classmates said that the photo was spellbound, because Agapi was speechless for a few seconds and then she followed him without hesitation.”

Second class teacher: *“I think that the idea to have them show possible abstract images of the case you presented them with was valuable in terms of your scope; it was a challenge for them to present their ideas and pass the intended meaning without using words. Apart from the fact that all the children seemed willing to engage actively, including those with learning difficulties, their presentations inspired thoughts for further elaboration especially afterwards, when they had to challenge and talk about those alternatives. If you remember, when the first group presented Agapi staying behind after she received Mr Xenarides’ letter, there were questions as to whether her friends noticed something, how and why they agreed to leave her alone – making connections with their reality. In other words, they agreed that they would never leave a friend behind and more importantly, in a place that may be dangerous. They also wondered whether they were also part of Mr Xenarides’ scheme. This kind of responses problematised their classmates; [...] when you asked them about the interviews of suspects, they had more*

ideas and arguments, inspired by this discussion” (informal interview of the second teacher recorded at the end of the second session held on 21/04/2012).

5.7.2. Narration/Storytelling (appendix:2, PC2:4.4)

A similar style of approaching a concept was employed in another activity that followed in a different workshop with this class (appendix:2, PC2:4.4). In specific, the children were invited to come up with alternatives to the way Mr Xenarides approached Agapi at a toy shop and tried to convince her to accept his present. This task was based on my previous narration, according to which I, as a chief detective, informed my colleagues that we could use Agapi’s diary, where she used to record details of her personal life, to shed light on the case under investigation:

❖ Example:

“Dear Diary,

Boy, was this an eventful day! As I was heading home from school, it started raining heavily. Who would have thought that it might rain in April? In Cyprus! Amazing, right? Anyway, I didn’t have my umbrella with me, so, to avoid getting drenched to the skin, I decided to go into a toy shop. What am I saying? This wasn’t just any toy shop! It was every kid’s dream! All the toys and games I had ever wanted were there, waiting for their new owner. Too bad my parents can’t afford a lot of luxuries these days... I would really love to get my hands on some of those toys! But no matter! Just being there, looking at the toys and games was

enough for now. I spent ages admiring the dolls and checking out the electronics section. I was genuinely, utterly happy.

‘Let it rain forever, for all I care’, I thought to myself! Anyway, at some point, a man appeared out of the blue. Mr Xenarides, he said his name was, and he said he could offer me any game or toy I wanted from the shop! How was this possible? I had just met him! Not to mention that my parents always tell me never to accept anything from strangers... But he was so persistent! He said he would offer me a tablet, something my parents would never have been able to afford! A tablet with millions of games installed. How I wanted this gift! I thanked him politely and said no, but then he said he had a daughter my age, whom I looked like a lot, which is why he wanted to give me a gift in the first place. He told me he knew my parents would tell me off for accepting something from a stranger, and explained that he is, in fact, a friend of theirs, so I had to accept his gift but tell them nothing, because he wanted to surprise them. How self-disciplined can a girl be? I accepted! As soon as the rain stopped, I left the shop. And here I am now! I am so happy! But I have to be very careful: if my parents see the tablet, I will ruin Mr Xenarides’ surprise.”

The above narration was a combination of storytelling and reading aloud. This is in accord with Maguire’s (1988) argument about the value of storytelling:

“Storytelling encompasses so much that it defies an easy label. The telling part of the term touches on its most manifest aspect; but it also includes listening, imagining, caring, judging, reading, adapting, creating,

observing, remembering and planning” (p.6).

Evidence of such responses occurred by the end of my narration: the children exhibited enthusiasm; a feeling coming not only from them as students, but, most importantly, as colleagues of the chief detective. When asked to comment on what they had heard, the children talked about the circumstances under which Agapi met Mr Xenarides, the way he approached her in order to get her attention and what that signified for his character and his intentions. In this context, not only did they consider and refer to alternative ways in which Agapi might have responded at that moment but also, they assessed them in relation to the room these responses allowed for Mr Xenarides to act; finally, they elaborated on the way they themselves would react had they been in her place. These comments offered the basis for an amalgamation of the information gathered, as shown in the example below, and raised a question: *“Had Agapi disappeared or was she kidnapped? And how did it all happen?”*

❖ **Examples (appendix: 2, PC2:4.4):**

Girl 1: *“It seems that Mr Xenarides became friends with Agapi before kidnapping her: as it appears from the information we have so far, an adult approached a child and offered to buy her a toy, a very expensive one – which is suspicious – and he did everything behind her parents’ back.”*

Girl 2: *“As we saw from the drawings, Agapi’s relationship with Mr Xenarides was not a typical one – I mean that her drawings and her writings reveal that they*

were good friends. The fact that this was a secret friendship which involved expensive presents makes us very skeptical ... We need to consider what his real intentions were and why Agapi accepted to conceal their relationship.”

Boy 1: *“I wonder: was she naive or just got excited because of the particular present? I mean, her parents specifically told her never to accept presents from strangers. Don’t forget that she is a girl and he is a man. We need to find out whether this man knew her parents in any way and if yes, what type of relationship they had. Apart from this, we have his name and we need to find whether it is real – I think the next step is running his name on our database to see whether his image matches any of the suspect photos on the system.”*

Girl 3: *“In her diary Agapi made mention of a surprise. She said that she didn't want to ruin Mr Xenarides’ surprise. So he and her parents knew each other and he managed to convince her that he was a good figure in their lives. If his intentions were good, why did he try to establish a relationship for such a long period of time? According to the diary, they first met on 20/10, and then again on 27/10. The last recorded meeting took place on 15/01, the day before her disappearance. We need to find out whether her parents or friends knew something more than what they admitted in their statements.”*

Boy 2: *“We need to consider the information we have up to now... I wonder*

whether his meeting with Agapi was accidental or whether he had planned it... In a way, the toy shop is the perfect place to meet a child; in this case, Agapi was alone, so this was a piece of cake for a paedophile – sorry, but I can't accept that his intentions were honest. This isn't believable."

As the above extracts reveal, the children attempted to live up to the expectations of their roles as detectives; not only did they offer their opinions about the case but they also posed questions, challenged the evidence and the characters' intentions, knowledge or feelings, made various connections with the evidence and sought alternatives. The consistent use of phrases such as "*we need to see/find out whether*" can be interpreted as evidence of their willingness to be open-minded and fair-minded in terms of achieving a rounded view of the case and then proceed to inferences or further actions to solve the problem under investigation. The children's responses could be construed as evidence of critical thinking in terms of self-regulation or metacognition, due to their potential identification with their attempt to monitor their thinking and its quality elaborating on what they already know, their goal and the way they can reach it as well as whether and how they make progress (Halonen, 1995; Halpern, 1998).

5.7.3. *Teacher in Role* (appendix:2, PC2:1:3; 1.5; 2-3.4; 6.3; 6.4)

All the introductions to the themes, the discussions and the conventions related to the *Mantle of the Expert* were identified by my contribution as *Teacher*

in Role in various contexts; as a “*facilitator*” (Bolton & Heathcote, 1995, p.35) who manages, questions and encourages collaboration while in “*role*” (*ibid*) within the frame, as the “*expert*” (*ibid*) scaffolding learning inside and outside the setting, as well as a “*participant in role*” (*ibid*) who introduces the tensions of provocation, challenges and expands horizons (*ibid*). With reference to the work with PC2, my roles as facilitator were those of: the chief detective, who introduces the issue of Agapi’s disappearance/kidnapping and challenges her colleagues’ thinking and evidence; Agapi, who finally appears to explain what happened and Mr Xenarides, who had to answer to the detectives, the police and the journalists after he was finally arrested. In these roles, I used the tools of withholding information and provocation to stimulate the children’s contribution in dialogues, enactment and critical thought (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999; de Bono, 2000).

Through the implementation of the *Teacher in Role* convention within the context of that of *Mantle of the Expert*, I intended to get children to think through problematic but linked knowledge and to take charge of the situation until they become more familiar with taking greater control of the drama themselves and thus of their own learning (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999). When, for example, in the role of the chief detective, I announced to my colleagues that Agapi had been found and Mr Xenarides had been arrested, I gave them the space to decide upon the ways in which he could/should be treated (appendix:2, PC2:5.5; 5.6). Following group discussions, they came up with self-directed ideas which they presented to the class, while my role involved standing back, challenging their views and encouraging a more thoughtful discussion by using phrases such as

“Suppose that...,” “If we could...”; “If people would let us....”; “I bet if we try we can....”, when required. This appeared to enhance their confidence to share their ideas and to take charge of their contributions in a more balanced learning dynamic since I was just an equal member of their team, a colleague of theirs and not an omniscient teacher. Having this in mind, when considering the structure of my lessons, I adopted the related planning frameworks for the proper application of Teacher in Role as described by Neelands (1984):

“The purpose of using teacher-in-role is to put the children into an immediate situation where they have to do the thinking, the talking, the responding, the decision-taking, the problem-solving [. . .] In drama it’s essential, whenever possible, to step back and push the group into using their own combined resources as a way of dealing with whatever arises. The teacher should deliberately withhold her expertise and knowledge even if that means long embarrassing pauses while the group figure out what to say or do for themselves; it must be the children’s work” (p.50).

It was the children’s work, the process of their thinking and the challenge of their ideas that guided the way drama work was further developed and provided the space for the enhancement of various critical thinking skills and dispositions, with great emphasis on reflective and possibility thinking, critical analysis of an argument and decision making (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999), as the following discussion extract illustrates.

An indispensable element that cultivated this attempt was that of tension,

a critical feature of drama (Bolton, 1988; Fleming, 2001; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Kitson, 1993). In this project (PC2) this was manifestly evident within the use of *Teacher in Role* convention, since it frequently marked moments which the children seized on for more active participation. Meanwhile, my presence in a role different from that of the teacher through the adoption of various voice tones, facial expressions and the deployment of speculative questions appeared to evoke puzzlement, conflict and ambiguity, all necessary elements for the development of more thoughtful and imaginative arguments. This tension also gave rise to a series of questions by the children, which indicated the degree to which they were immersed in the project, while it created conditions for thinking and ideational fluency (Grainger, 2003; Neelands & Goode, 1995; Wagner, 1999).

❖ **Example (appendix:2, PC2:5.6):**

**** Antri in the role of chief detective:** *“So, by looking at this data how would you suggest we proceed? We have all the details on Mr Xenarides and we need to think what criminal charges he will face for his involvement in Agapi’s disappearance.”*

Boy 1: *“We will tell him that we have evidence from her diary and her drawings that they knew each other and he is our prime suspect in the case of her disappearance.”*

Antri: *“Yes, but, is this enough you think? If he denies everything?”*

Boy 2: *“I suggest we should follow his moves. He may lead us to Agapi.”*

Girl 1: *“We know that he and his wife leave the house every day at 7. The only person who stays behind is the housekeeper. At some point she will get out and then we can get in and search for evidence.”*

Boy 3: *“First we need to make sure that neither he nor his wife can flee the country. We must contact the airport.”*

(.....)

Antri: *“What brilliant ideas! The other chief policemen and I thought them through last night. Look, she just sent me a text message. She says that her team have just apprehended Mr Xenarides, his wife and Agapi at the airport! We are very lucky after all. Let’s see what all of them have to say. Let’s start from Mr Xenarides. When our colleagues approached him, he stated that the girl he had with him was his daughter and not Agapi. We need to be careful: if the girl is indeed his daughter, we could be sued for slander. I need your opinions on that.”*

Boy 1: *“Yes, you are right. But according to his housekeeper, they do not have children. How is it possible to make such a claim?”*

Girl 1: *“I think we need to bring him here, as well as ‘his family’ and run a DNA test.”*

Antri: *“I don’t know about that. To run a DNA test, we need to have strong evidence that would justify such a thing.”*

Boy 2: *“OK! Let’s bring him here, ask him to prove his relationship with the girl in any way he can and then, if it is needed and we all agree, we can proceed with the test.”*

Girl 2: *“We need to question him in order to verify his claims against our evidence.”*

Antri: *“Right! You are all experts here, I need your help! What kind of questions do you think we should ask?”*

Boy 3: *“First, we need to let him talk and defend himself and then, pose questions to identify his relationship with Agapi and her family.”*

Boy 2: *“What if Agapi is his daughter? I mean, is it possible that he is her real father? That’s why I suggested the DNA test in the first place.”*

Antri: *“Hmm. We haven’t thought of that possibility. If this is true, would that justify taking Agapi, if in fact he did?”*

Girl 3: *“No... I think we should pose questions to all of them at the same time and then compare their answers; then we can tell them that the others admitted certain things and examine their reaction! I’ve seen that in a film and it worked!”*

[...]

5.7.4. *Hot Seating the Teacher in Role* (appendix:2, PC2:6.3)

Howard Gardner (2004) argued that questions are crucial to the thoughtful mind, and sometimes they are even more important than the answers; on these grounds, I attempted to provide the space for the encouragement of questions within an enjoyable and innovative context, through the application of the *Hot Seating* convention. As stated above, one of the roles I took in the context of drama was that of Mr Xenarides, who was apprehended by the detectives and the police. Two children acting as police officers took me to the police station where, in cooperation with their colleagues (the other children), they interrogated me prior to the trial. These questions were (mainly) open, long and more research-inducing ones, with the intention of reflecting on the interviewee's responses, gather as much information as possible and uncover motives and subtexts in order to achieve an overall synthesis and evaluation of the data collected.

Posing the right questions was one of the aims set within the framework of this project as an indispensable skill to be cultivated or improved in an attempt to enhance the children's critical thinking. According to Nosich (2005), critical thinkers are people who can discern that there are questions that need to be addressed and thus, they focus on asking good questions in order to go to the heart of the matter. As reflected in critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1988), the approach used here, the children's critical thinking was not only driven by answers, but, effectively, by essential questions of a more exploratory format which were applied to identify problems and define tasks, delineate issues and then attempt to solve them (Castoriadis, 1998).

❖ **Examples of questions posed (appendix:2, PC2:6.3):**

- *“You are charged with the abduction of Agapi Agapiou, who went missing on 16/01/2012. What do you have to say for yourself?”*

- *“How do you explain the fact that you, an adult, had a relationship with a minor?”*

- *“Why did you approach Agapi Agapiou at the toy shop? What was the objective of that meeting?”*

- *“Were you involved with Agapi’s family?”*

- *“Why did you ask her to conceal your relationship?”*

- *“What was the nature of your relationship?”*

- *“Agapi said you told her you have a daughter her age. This was your excuse for wanting to offer her gifts and spend time with her. You used this lie to approach her and finally abduct her. What do you have to say for yourself?”*

The cognitive style of these questions implied that the children were acting and thinking quite naturally in their roles, while convergent thinking was shared across the class, albeit within an imaginative and divergent context. This does not mean that they were not creative; rather, they were so focused on their investigation and on Mr Xenarides that their questions were cohesive and built upon each other. As Gardner (2004) states, the focus on inquiry permits different people to apply comparable approaches or to arrive to similar responses or

conclusions to a problem although they might have different reasons for their result; however, there are other informative aspects to be taken into account when doing so.

The concept of doing the right thing for the wrong reasons is closely relevant here. In this context, the morality and the legacy of the action is challenged in terms of its motive, be it for selfish or other personal reasons (Gardner, 2004; Guilford, 1959). With reference to the context of *Hot Seating* here, to the question why I, in the role of Mr Xenarides, took Agapi, I responded that I did not force her to do so but it was her choice to follow me. What is more, she enjoyed being on my property, because there she could enjoy luxuries which she could only dream of at home. For my role, this action was “right” and reasonable: my family could not have children and since it came to my attention that Agapi was a poor girl, I wanted to help her as if she were my daughter. This explanation was given in order to challenge the children’s thinking and ethical stances towards similar phenomena and the way they would respond towards these if they had the chance to contribute. In their responses, some of the children seemed to accept the reason for which Mr Xenarides acted in such a way, but nobody defended him; as they stated, his action was illegal and unethical. This might be construed as evidence of habitus, which relates to the function of common sense as a tool for interpreting the world, and the habitual social sources of consciousness (Bourdieu, 1991). Habitual sources had an impact on the way the children acting as detectives treated Mr Xenarides; however, it is important that they acknowledged it and stated their disposition to judge the defendant based

on the law. To this end, their interrogation was fierce and aimed at finding his real intentions and the reasons for which the girl's parents or the relevant department were not notified.

Following Guilford's (1959) approach, I am inclined to believe that that the children identified flexibility in terms of challenging ambiguity and uncertainty: this is illustrated by the fact that they attempted to take advantage of Mr Xenarides' responses in order to make connections with the data collected prior to his arrest (i.e., the context of their first meeting, the lie about having a daughter at Agapi's age, his persistence to keep their friendship a secret), go deeper into the story and elaborately process the information. The way the discussion developed through questioning the hot-seated character appeared to encourage children to employ a more critical stance towards the information provided and to assess incidents objectively, as the following extract suggests:

❖ **Example (appendix:2, PC2:6.3):**

Girl 1: *"From his responses it was clear that he tried to defend himself, while at the same time presenting himself as Agapi's rescuer. If, as he says, his motive was just to help the child, then why didn't he go through her parents or the social services? His action was definitely illegal; being an adult, he knows perfectly well that he is not allowed to take children, even if it is 'for their own good', without the permission of their guardians. His claim that the girl went to him willingly reveals both his irresponsibility and his attempt to confuse us."*

Girl 2: *“In his hearing he stated that he asked Agapi not to say anything about their friendship to her parents, friends or teachers. This shows a person who prepares the ground for kidnapping while taking advantage of the innocent youth of children. Obviously, we need to examine the parental role in this child’s upbringing – were they good and supportive parents, or was it because they neglected Agapi that Mr Xenarides decided to act in the way he did to rescue Agapi?”*

Boy 1: *“Taking a child while being aware that the media and police are looking for her is in itself evidence of guilt. In addition, Agapi’s claims that she was told lies about the daughter that guy supposedly had in combination with the fact that the girl tried to escape but he stopped her, point to criminal actions.”*

Boy 2: *“He said that he didn’t let her go back because everybody would think that he had harmed her, in other words, he was afraid of his family’s reputation. [...] In whatever he claims, it is clear that he is a selfish person and above all a criminal. Such issues related to children are twice as serious; he needs to be punished for his actions.”*

Within the framework of the various conventions used, in this case the *Hot-seating*, the cultivation of critical thinking skills and dispositions was purposefully fostered; this included a movement towards the development and

enhancement of a critical stance (e.g. by helping the children make informed questions, decide when and what methods and strategies to use to deal with a situation) and the enhancement of the ability to detect problems, require evidences, be open-minded and reflective minded, analyse, synthesise, evaluate and compare information and issues.

5.7.5. *Writing in Role* (appendix:2, PC2: 4.8)

Unlike improvisations and other forms of talk or discussions that encouraged the children to share their voices, albeit in an immediate way, *Writing in Role* was used as a basic convention for all my drama workshops to help participants activate deeper levels of thinking, focus and response. Essentially, the children were not asked to merely write down anything that was already considered and discussed; rather, they were encouraged to think critically about the topics, characters, situations and events as well as to uncover questions that required more time to process and experience alternative ways of being and knowing (Safford & Barrs, 2005, p.78; Wagner, 1999, p.122). This is in keeping with Booth's (1996, p.123) notes, according to which, writing whilst in role as another allows children to attempt to understand imaginatively what is going on by functioning like writers.

With reference to the application of this convention in PC2, the children were asked to write a journalistic article in which they reflected critically and creatively on the drama context as it unravelled up to the moment Mr Xenarides

was arrested and hot-seated. The following extract is presented as an example of how the children's written responses demonstrated not only their understanding of the characters' actions but also of how the plot modified their stances towards these characters. Their writing was not assessed, graded or judged – it was read in order to report their interpretation of an imaginative experience and present various responses, including the characters' actions and viewpoints on the issues under examination. What was examined in the children's reflective writing was the extent to which they “*generate(d) and refine(d)*” (Britton, 1970, p.51) understandings and information (*ibid*) while they shared their voices and thinking processes (especially those who were normally quiet in discussion).

The children's writing was assigned as pair work and was carried out during the literacy class, which the class teacher agreed to concede. I asked the children to first brainstorm with their partners and consider whether any points should be revised or elaborated accordingly. This assignment seemed to challenge the children's thinking and catch their imagination while at the same time it motivated them to contribute. This was especially true of the students whose mother tongue was not Greek, those with learning difficulties or those who were reluctant to carry out writing tasks. As John *et al.* (2012) argue, children's grouping or peer interactions in an enjoyable and playful, yet serious and focused way through drama encourages them to work together successfully and improve the process of their thinking and general learning;

“[w]orking supportively with collaborating peers, can leave children less individually and personally exposed, with the result that they may be

fearful about the writing they are doing together. The ideas of a less able or less confident writer can be valued, used and emerge within successful, jointly owned piece of writing” (ibid, p.22).

The example that follows is used to indicate how two girls approached their roles and the topic under investigation as well as the extent to which evidences of critical thinking occurred.

❖ **Example (appendix:2, PC2: 4.8):**

“The high-profile case that shocked the island of Cyprus and indeed the world concerns the discovery of a 10-year-old schoolgirl who was held hostage for three weeks by a couple in a house in Limassol. Cyprus police was led to the house by an anonymous caller who reported that the minor had been missing for three weeks under mysterious circumstances.

The victim’s parents claimed that on the day of the abduction she had left school at 13:05, when classes typically end, and was supposed to return home on foot. The girl never returned, and after 24 hours, they reported her missing, and called a private detective to investigate the case.

The police collected clues from the site where she was last seen, namely Elpida Park in the town centre and conducted interviews with family, teachers and friends of the victim. The investigation led the police to the Limassol residence today at 07:30. According to our correspondent, the 40-year old kidnapper and his wife initially claimed that they were the girl’s parents, but after their arrest, they admitted that she is not in fact their biological daughter. They went on to confess

that they had taken her home in their custody so as to 'take care of her'.

The defendant confessed that the couple wanted to adopt the girl, so they kidnapped her. The District Attorney authorised a more detailed investigation so as to shed light on the defendant's intentions, his relationship with the girl as well as other motives related to the case. Although the minor reported that she had become friends with her kidnappers, the police are still examining the possibility that she has been abused. Meanwhile, the police are concerned that this case sets a precedent for abductions in toy shops and public areas. The kidnapper has been taken into police custody along with his wife, who is also facing charges."

This short extract of a rather long answer indicates that drama – and *Writing in Role* in particular – can afford children room for analytical thinking by helping them to treat data in a realistic, meaningful context and by providing them with opportunities to reflect upon situations. The children's writing also involved using information related to the case and making reference to specific relevant facts. What is more, they worked towards the analysis and identification of key points presented in a productive and objective way. The features noted above could be interpreted as elements of critical thinking, and are associated with Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) theory of cognitive process, which is the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom *et al.*, 1956). Their approach highlighted the significance of processing and comprehending information rather than the learning objectives per se. This revised taxonomy has two dimensions; those of *Knowledge* and *Cognitive Process* – essentially, compared to Bloom's

original taxonomy, here the nouns are changed to verbs (such as remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create) and the order of the last two levels is reversed.

Indeed, the children's writing product entailed the transfer of knowledge, its modification in the given context and a communicative intent – elaborating on the use and effect of both linguistic features and text construction – to provide the imagined readers with the necessary details about the facts presented in the most objective way possible.

5.8. Third Unit of Analysis: Working with PC3

5.8.1. *Decision Alley* (appendix:3, PC3:4.5)

The convention of *Decision Alley* was applied to the drama context designed for PC3 for the purposes of intriguing and challenging the children's thinking. This strategy was used as a medium to explore the citizens' thoughts and to provide participants with the chance to reflect in detail on the issue of whether to leave the child (boy/girl) behind and to consider their dilemmas at that particular moment. In its application, I asked children to form two lines – approximately a metre apart from each other – representing the two opposing viewpoints (whether to take the child with them regardless of his/her illness or leave him/her behind). In order to standardise the responses, I assigned a specific viewpoint to specific children and I asked them to provide alternatives for the opposite view, if they wished to do so. The sharing of thoughts began as soon as the participants I had chosen started walking between the two lines. The reason for which I asked more students to be in that role was to encourage them to improve their arguments or voice more than one argument, add gestures and use appropriate expressions. Instead of asking them to decide what their decisions were in the end, I asked them to think of the implications each decision had on their fellow citizens back in the city on the spot (same activity – appendix:3, PC3:4.5). Specifically, the children had to decide in terms of the ill young children who followed the wise men to the mountains in search of medicine that was necessary for saving their fellow citizens. By standing in one of two parallel lines I asked them to form, they indicated their decision: either take them back to

their homes or leave them behind as the law demanded. My participation in the role of the mission group's conscience from a particular perspective seemed to provide the children with an additional purpose to examine and develop critical stances, as they reflected upon the events of the drama context. As Kramsch (1998) notes, a stance is a means by which a learner can not only articulate a viewpoint – or an amalgam of viewpoints – but also communicate it in public. As Booth (1996) adds, while being in the role and in the voices of certain characters, emotionally and behaviourally, they are transferred to a “*new sphere*” (p.123), where they try to make sense of what is going on. An example of the way the children approached their roles using their voices and bodies to communicate their meanings is the following:

❖ **Example (appendix:3, PC3:4.5):**

⇒ **Line of children arguing for keeping the child with them on the way back home**

(1) *“We need to take the child with us... It is shame to leave it behind.. Your guilty conscience will torture you if you let a human being die”* (Wagging their finger at the character who passes by).

(2) *“This child joined us on this mission and helped us in difficult times... We need to appreciate his contribution and effort and to distinguish between what the laws demand and what it would be right to do... ”* (Patting the arm of the passer-by).

(3) *“Even though I believe and support the laws of our community, – that’s why I am a chosen member of this group – I can now realise that some laws are*

imperfect: for instance, the one saying that in case somebody gets ill, they will need to stay behind is not fair... We are missing the point of the mission. It defeats the purpose of the mission: saving some people from the disease while sacrificing others...” (Makes a step forward, looks at the character who passes the alley in the eyes and lifts his chin, as if to attract his attention).

(4) *“I feel guilty for agreeing on certain rules before coming up here... You and I did so because our understanding was different at the time... This does not mean that we need to obey the law... We need to think that every member of our team matters... We always thought in this way... At the end of the day, the law might have a symbolic meaning; perhaps it was made to inspire the people who wanted to join to be brave enough to sacrifice themselves if they have to, to protect the mission. Let’s think of it that way!”* (Makes a circle around the passing character while she looks in his eyes).

(5) *“Let’s consider the amount of challenges we were confronted with before reaching the peak of the mountain to get the medicines... How involved and united we were... Shall we keep this bond until the end or just obey a law that has nothing to offer us in general and especially at this point?”* (Walks across the fellow members in the same line touching their arms).

⇒ **Line of children arguing for leaving the ill child behind as the community laws dictate**

(6) *“All members of the mission studied the laws before joining... they have no choice but to obey them”* (Aggressive tone as if they he wanted to remind others of

the agreement).

(7) *“They successfully found the medicines, but if the ill child holds them back, they will not be able to return on time and save the other people...”* (Calm tone of voice, accompanied by a warning conveyed by the facial expression).

(8) *“If we want to be a community that respects our rights and our duties, we need to obey the law... Just think of the people who didn't join us because they considered the implications of their choices. Both we and the child knew in advance our duty and its potential consequences... We need to remember that and do the right thing; that is what we have agreed to do”* (Looks at everybody as if she wanted to attract their attention and convince them of the validity of her argument).

The above extracts illustrate the way the children supported their views by taking into account the previous and current context in which they found themselves (agreeing upon rules that seemed fair or being confronted by the dilemma of whether they should obey the law or act based on their beliefs). The children who were against the idea of taking the child with them elaborated on evidence and on their “duty” to be fair to their colleagues as well as to the mission (6,7,8) while they based their arguments on their attempt to be “trusted” as their actions were based on thoughtful considerations (8). On the other hand, the willingness and realisation of the need to redefine the actions, decisions and the general aim of the mission on behalf of some of the members of the other group

could be read as indicative of reflective judgment (3, 4, 5), open-mindedness (3, 4, 5) and fair-mindedness (1-5) in the new context in which they found themselves (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999). The aim here was not to compare only which line of argument was convincing but, principally to uncover divergent points of view and offer the children the opportunity to realise the importance of considering all the alternatives and elaborate on their variety when it comes to making a decision that affects their lives (Booth, 1996, p.141); all these constitute attitudes and skills a critical thinker should encompass as a personality (Castoriadis, 1991, p.113).

There is evidence, then, that *Decision Alley*, seized both within the dramatic frame and outside it, provided reflective spaces in which children could make connections with themselves while empathising with the characters and the situations: (1); (2); (*“if I were in the place of the child, I would like to be alive because if my parents survived from the disease, they would die as soon as they learnt that I was left behind”*). In this sense, their imaginative involvement appeared to allow space for their thoughts, feelings and ideas to be internalised and filtered, both consciously and unconsciously (Barnes, 1999); as Wolf *et al.* (1997) note, *“rather than separate intellect from affect, drama like life, weaves the two together”* (p.496). In the discussion that followed the *Decision Alley*, the children’s ideas and empathy invoked by this artistic experience were voiced tentatively; central to the discussion on the decision the group should finally make was the importance of realising that the world in which they live requires that they continually relearn; consider alternatives; rethink decisions, actions and values; and re-evaluate the way they live and approach people, issues and situations

beyond habits, automation, fixed procedures and given ethics/norms/laws. These ideas and realisations can be identified in the dialogue extract (part of the post-workshop interviews with the children held on 24/05) that follows:

❖ **Example:**

Boy 1: *“At least here – in drama – we could go against the laws. When asked to decide upon a decision that related to the survival of a person, the laws came second, whereas the human was a priority. And this is because fixed procedures and laws don’t tell us how we should respond every time but help us keep our focus. I wish we could have the chance to approach issues in this way in our real life.”*

Girl 1: *“When we faced the dilemma of whether we should take the child with us or leave him/her behind, I did not think of the mission itself because I took for granted that we would achieve our goal, regardless of the challenges and obstacles. That’s because we were a team, and as a successful team we should think of each mate, not just as an additional number in the team but as a human being. It was then that I realised that our aims can be approached in many different ways – as in this case, abandoning or taking the child with us – and it depends on us to be brave enough in order to make the decision that represents our points of view as free personalities.”*

Girl 2: *“At first it was clear that being a citizen depended on the law; that law was the main reason that sparked the debate of whether to take a girl or a boy to*

the mission in terms of considering who could do it better. As characters, we knew what participating in the mission meant and we warned both the girl and the boy of the possibility of leaving them behind, as the law demanded. However, at that moment, I think all of us felt the need to escape. Some of us argued in favour of letting the child behind but this was because you asked us to do so in order to listen to alternatives. In fact I am sure we all put ourselves in the position of the boy/girl and realised that, even though we wanted to do right by our agreement, and rescuing one of our mates could indeed cause problems, it would nevertheless strengthen our willingness to be part of that mission.”

Girl 3: *“I think that at first we took it for granted that we should approach the topic as the citizens of that place should. However, it soon became clear that not all the issues are the same and even if in the past a law or an approach was considered effective, it was important to reconsider the case, to think of all the implications and to make a decision that does not only make us good citizens based on past beliefs but might reflect our consistency throughout various conditions.”*

5.8.2. Exploring Gender and Stereotypes towards Critical Thinking

Previously, we discussed some differences relating to how the girls and boys from all the classes responded to particular activities in terms of utilising the opportunity to develop or to present skills and dispositions related to critical thinking, either in circle time or in role-play. Although this work was not designed to focus on gender-specific attitudes, I observed that – especially with students from the third class – gender did influence the participants’ decisions in the workshops. This was particularly evident in the context of the theatrical play *“The one who says yes and the one who says no”*. Here, the children, the boys mostly, had considerable difficulty in being open-minded and flexible, both of which are essential characteristics that should define any critical thinker (literature review chapter), as we shall see in the examples and discussion that follow. Considering the importance of this issue, I will attempt to shed light on why social culture influenced those children’s way of thinking. I will also explain my endeavour to challenge stereotypes and foster qualities of critical thinking that the children seemed to lack, such as being open-minded, fair-minded and independent-minded.

An element that is closely connected to social culture is gender identity and there are various ways in which this can be developed through education (Lloyd & Duveen, 1992). Interestingly, the existing literature, especially studies on drama education, place more emphasis on the impact drama has on the shape and construction of female identities (i.e., Gallagher, 2000; Hatton, 2003; Riviere, 2005), while only a small body of research focuses on boys in this context

(Gallagher, 2006). The existing literature relating to male students and drama is often connected to the challenges they experience and the negative impact their participation in drama classes has on their schoolwork; what is more, this gap in literature highlights the need for a more insubstantial framework for gender relations in the drama classroom (McDonald, 2000). Notwithstanding the small number of studies that acknowledge the positive input of boys in drama education (i.e., those of McDonald, 2000 and Sanders, 2003), their findings are of paramount importance for the broadening of pedagogical knowledge and for making connections with instances such as those presented in this thesis.

The work of many researchers on gender identity and its construction in the last 20 years seem to be controversial: while some assign masculine behaviour to a surge of testosterone and feminine behaviour to a surge of estrogens (nature) (Biddulph, 1997), there are others who believe this behaviour to be socially developed or even, imposed on them through established group members such as family, peers and the media (nurture) (Bennet & Sani, 2004; Moscovici *et al.*, 2013). In this respect, the theories of gender stereotypes and fixed identities are useful in providing a possible explanation as to why boys and girls adopt particular social characteristics.

In her book “*Being boys, Being girls*”, Paechter (2007) claims that children, from the very early stages of their lives, are given a name, that of a boy or of a girl, and are therefore placed in either the group of masculinity or femininity in a particular community where they are experiencing and learning how to be alike, how to think about themselves, as well as the inferences of what

they are, do or say. In this way, boys can be considered as “*apprentice men*” (p.7) who are learning through observation what it means to be a man in the particular community in which they live; similarly, girls are seen as apprentice women, imitating adult women and joining their undertakings (*ibid*). Thus, for children to hang about a certain community of practice, they need to adjust their performances to the norms of that community (*ibid*). As Butler (1990) elaborates,

“[g]ender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds create the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (p.140).

This coincides with Paechter’s (2007) argument, according to which femininities and masculinities do not only differ among people, but they are also conflicting within individuals, depending on where they are, and with whom. This approach applies here for the study of the third primary class and more importantly, it defines the reasons and the ways in which gender identities can challenge the nurturing of children’s critical thinking. As explained in the Research Methodology chapter, these children were growing up in a village, which traditionally promoted identity models that were strongly constructed in favour of masculinity, as well as its status and power. As the teacher explained in her first interview, the small society of that village tended to promote the image of the strong, successful and crafty male who might occasionally turn into a hoodlum,

but this is perceived to be a result of increased testosterone. Instead of this being a negative trait, it renders him respectful and appreciated, since “*this is the way real men behave*” (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012).

Phenomena related to the reproduction of such models raise issues of power as being granted with the consent of the other members of the community (i.e., women). This understanding of power finds its place in Foucault’s (1980) theory, according to which power “*is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society*” (p.93) since it permeates society in a complicated, intertwining and capillary manner, throughout human interactions, institutional relations, and spatial alignments (*ibid*). Thus, power cannot be understood as being imposed from above for, as Foucault (1980) contends, the attention should be paid not so much on who wields power, but on the developments through which power relations come to be mobilised and generalised.

According to the teacher of the third class, the systematic cultivation of masculine and feminine identities in that particular area resulted in the indoctrination of what is right and what it is wrong, according to the children’s own criteria, which were none other than those of their community. This argument was illustrated with the following example: after attending a seminar related to the campaign against the use of firecrackers during Easter (which constitute a major life-threatening local custom), some of the teacher’s students boasted about playing with firecrackers no matter if they went against the law, because that, they believed, “*made them real crafty men*” (third class teacher

interviewed on 23/04/2012). This persistence on gender hierarchy finds its place in Butler's (1990) observations, according to which, the various types of masculinities are formed within the particularities of the communities where they are experienced and practised. Essentially, they are performed differently according to the situations in which people find themselves and the way in which they perceive their roles in specific local frameworks, as they strive to be recognised as socially competent. As Foucault (1982) states, "*power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free*" (p.221). In a nutshell, to incorporate and depend upon human freedom, power, hierarchy and hegemony we need to consider and depend upon resistance (*ibid*). It is on this context of human power that I based my efforts to challenge the children's stereotypes about their gender in relation to particular social actions and I attempted to enhance their critical thinking. This was no small feat: although I was informed about the children's attitudes towards classmates and the other gender, I did not realise the degree to which the concept of gender prohibited or guided their way of thinking (especially that of boys), which was made clear during the first workshops.

During the very first workshop, the children were presented with the possibility of enabling a girl to join a group of brave people determined to take part in a survival mission with the objective of rescuing their fellow citizens who were sick. In facing that dilemma, most girls were confused, while only two of them were willing to take the girl's side. On the other hand, all the boys opposed that scenario; they insisted that only boys should take part in dangerous missions because "they're boys", whereas the role of girls should be to take care of their

parents. Subsequently, the boys refused to participate in a “pointless” discussion, as they called it, since, it should be taken for granted that a girl is definitely incapable of a) joining a group of brave people, b) taking risks, c) overcoming danger and d) leaving her parents behind to pursue a mission. The attitudes of these children are reflected in the following example, which is part of a conversation I had with them:

❖ **Example (appendix:3, PC3:1.5):**

Antri: *“So, what is your opinion on that?”*

Boy 1: *“Come on! Are you serious? It is impossible to send a girl over there! It is pointless... She is just a girl! What can she possibly offer?”*

Boy 2: *“Yes, she is just a girl! I think she is not mature enough, and she did not even consider whether she can make it or how dangerous this mission is.”*

Girl 1: *“Why is there always a problem with girls? Don’t you understand that she wants to join the team because she wants to save her parents? I think we should let her join... If I were in her place, I would definitely want to do something to help my parents...”*

Boy 3: *“If we allow a girl to go, her parents will die sooner because she will not be taking care of them; or they may die of sadness thinking that she is in danger. It is not the same as if she were a boy... If we sent him, he would definitely make it... I am sure that he would be much quicker and that he would bring the medicine on time. Girls are not meant for these kinds of things....”*

Boy 4: *“If we send a boy, we have more chances to achieve our goal because he is definitely braver and there is less possibility of putting them in danger.”*

Antri: *“So you mean that because he is a boy, just because he is a boy, he can do it better than a girl?”*

Boy 4: *“Yes! Miss, there is no way you can compare a boy with a girl! Boys are boys and girls are girls! It is as simple as that..!”*

Antri: *“What do you mean?”*

Boy 4: *“Boys are stronger than girls and girls belong in safe places. Only real boys can survive dangerous situations.”*

Boy 5: *“I agree!”*

Girl 1: *“I do not agree... This is unfair... Why do you think that only boys can make it? There are equal possibilities of danger or failure... Come on..! Just think about it... If we send a boy, he is just as likely to have an accident as a girl.”*

Boy 1: *“No way! He is not an idiot... There is nothing to worry about if we send the boy. Nothing bad happens to boys...”*

Girl 2: *“But she wants it so much... She may want it more than a boy and if this is the case, she will make it.”*

The dialogue provided above clearly illustrates the impact of the

children's interaction with their local community in terms of approaching social and, in particular, gender issues and the way in which the children's ideas about gender manifest themselves in the communication of values (discussion with the class teacher on 25/02/12). It is important to note that the boys' responses were honest and motivated by deep sociocultural convictions. Their teacher commented:

“My boys defend their arguments about their gender in a very passionate way because, as far as I know them, they strongly believe that this is how things are and this is the way they should think and act” (ibid).

The boys' perception of what it means to be a boy or a man, reinforced by the girls' passivity, was very clearly defined by the community of which they were members. As Davies (2003) suggests, this may be indicative of the fact that gender is based on a notion of a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity; by adopting a bi-polar model that structures the way genders think, boys and men support views that are associated with power, while girls and women consign views that often involve adapting. As Connell (1995; 2000) notes, this is the reason why boys seek to project hegemonic masculinities.

In this context, I aimed to challenge children's hegemonic narratives about gender in terms of conformity and transgressions of gender stereotypes. My second aim was to examine the ways in which children's gendered knowledge was both articulated and problematised through the dramatic process, as the drama invited them to explore issues and intersections of self and relationship and to

identify action in everyday life and in imaginary contexts. The role-play activities and their deconstruction were now designed with the intention of decontaminating complex processes of signification as well as scrutinising and repositioning themselves in relation to the action and the emerging context. Gallagher (2000, p.43) refers to the way this generates restlessness and tension in the class; in drama, discovering the necessities of a group for social intercourse is expressed as being sensitised by the other peoples' words and actions. Although this is important, Nicholson (2005, p.82) warns that we should be skeptical of declarations that imply that drama always transforms beliefs for the better. When, however, designing school-based learning in drama, we should adopt the attitude of possibility, in other words, embrace the notion that change is possible. With this in mind, my aim was to make the students realise the challenges posed by stereotypes and to invite them to think of alternatives without expecting that their entire way of thinking would be changed in the course of seven sessions.

Owing to the fact that the boys objected to the idea of a girl participating in the rescue mission on the grounds that she is a girl, regardless of age or maturity, I suggested inviting her in order to establish whether she was really determined to take the risk and whether she was aware of the possible negative implications of her decision. Posing questions embedded in the drama convention of the "hot seating" was an important tool in the critical thinking toolbox. To open up possibilities for critical thinking, children were encouraged to ask the girl questions related to her decision to join the mission and to consider their relevance, importance, and rationality (appendix:3, PC3:1.6;1.7). After a short

group discussion, they decided upon some questions they wanted to pose. Once more, the girls were more focused on the task at hand, whereas the boys' party made the gender issue very evident; in specific, apart from the questions, they tried to persuade the girl that the right thing to do is to stay behind (underlined sentences). In order to monitor the discussion effectively, I played the part of the girl while attempting to challenge the children's thinking, as is shown in the following extract.

❖ **Example (appendix:3, PC3:1.7):**

Girl 1: *"What made you consider taking such a risk?"*

Girl 2: *"To what degree are you sure you want to join the mission?"*

Boy 1: *"Have you considered the dangers? In case you are sick, or something bad happens to you, we will not be able to save you. Have you thought of that?"*

Girl 3: *"What will you do in case the chief does not let you join?"*

Boy 2: *"Do you have any brothers who can join the mission in your place? You are a girl and you should stay home. If you have a brother, he should go because he will know what to do."*

The girl's hot-seating was followed by a discussion on her responses to their questions and warnings. Next, a decision had to be made through voting about whether to allow her to join the mission while explaining the reasons for voting for or against her. The children voted along gender lines and the voting ended up in a tie. I, as the chief participant, voted in favour of sending the girl to

the mountain. This triggered a reaction by the boys, who claimed that they “knew what would follow” meaning “the girl’s difficulties to fit in with the team of braves”. Next, according to the plot, when the girl was sent via the strategy of “*Whoosh*”¹³ to the mountains, she got very sick. The reason for this Brecht-inspired plot twist was to critically approach the theme of passively following laws given by the state, without challenging them (as explained at Chapter 3: Context of Research). What is more, this was a strategy that aimed to subtly re-invite and motivate the boys to take active roles throughout the rest of the drama workshops. As I expected, the boys were very pleased with this scenario because their predictions “came true”.

Because of these reactions, the challenge for me was to convince the boys (and girls) to think of alternatives and to question assumptions about genders, especially masculinity. In addition, those were the aims related to the agenda of critical thinking I had at that moment. In order to do so, I used the strategy of *flashback* so as to go back at the moment when they were deciding upon allowing the girl to fulfil her desire (after the hot-seating, when we had to reach a decision). Next, I asked the children to tell me which member of the girl’s family could take

¹³ I used this engaging and interactive storytelling technique, which was devised by Joe Winston (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2014, p.266), to bring my story alive while I was the storyteller with a guiding role. I asked the whole group to sit in a circle and explained to them that everybody would have the opportunity to participate in whatever I narrated, either as characters or objects, by coming in the centre of the circle. If at any time I said “*Whoosh!*”, they had to quickly leave the centre of the circle and return to their places. At the beginning of the narrative, I referred to a key character, object or event, and invited one child to step into the circle and make a relevant pose or shape. In case I introduced two or more characters, children could step in simultaneously. As I introduced more characters or objects, I tried to move around the circle so as to give all the children the chance to engage. In this way, different children got to play the same character in several phases and try various roles, regardless of their gender (appendix:3, PC3:2.5).

her place (as stated at the beginning of the story, every family had to have one representative sent to the mission, as part of their citizenship agreement). As expected, the boys eagerly chose her brother as the ideal candidate for the position. To establish whether they had considered him ideal on the basis of his age, I asked them to guess how old the brother was. Surprisingly enough, the boys had not considered age as a determining factor, even though the model of the older brother taking the family under his wings has long been in the culture of Cyprus. Instead, once more, gender stereotypes overshadowed the male students' way of thinking; as they put it, "*regardless of his age, he is a boy, so he can definitely make it!*" (boy from PC3 – appendix:3, PC3:3.3).

A major characteristic of cognitive theories of gender is the stress on developmental changes in understanding gender, which may be associated with the children's changing cognitive abilities (i.e. to acknowledge multiple/alternative scopes) and developing comprehension of ideas. Because of such changes, the relative strength (rigidity) of children's viewpoints about gender and the behaviours they develop as a result is expected to expand and be eliminated across their development (Martin & Rube, 2004). Considering the above description of the male students of the third class, it seems safe to conclude that Martin and Rube's (2004) argument cannot be confirmed. This conclusion has also been enhanced by another incident: in a discussion the current teacher had with the head-teacher and other colleagues who taught the same class in the past, it became clear that the boys kept developing the stereotypes and the attitudes of sexism they had adopted from their community instead of eliminating them. This consequently

prohibited them from cultivating critical thinking skills and especially, dispositions related to critical thinking. In the class teacher's words:

“the long-term promotion of such stereotypes as experienced in their social environment seems to establish strong beliefs and perpetuate the illusion that these beliefs are worth-holding, while in actual fact they block the children's open-mindedness, reflective mind-ness and, I think, critical thinking in general” (third teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012).

Aina and Cameron (2011) reported similar findings after studying different cases of children whose conduct was controlled and guided by gender-related stereotypes. According to them, stereotypes and sexism limit potential social and cognitive growth and development because internalising negative stereotypes impacts on young children's self-esteem, their behaviour, their performance and the way they see the world in general. In this vein, Nicholson's (1995) suggestion that *“questions of gender might be recognised rather than denied”* (p.27) could inform a later reflection here on how and whether drama might achieve gender equality of learning; that is, *“learning to communicate in dramatic form rather than changing children as people”* (ibid, p.34).

The teacher's comments noted above were reflected in the discussion that followed the students' conversation in role, in which it became evident that the boys were very excited they had achieved to send a boy to the mission. For them, the male gender alone ensured that the boy candidate would successfully respond to the challenge, much better than his sister: *“See, Miss, a boy is a boy. You will*

see for yourself that we were right to insist that he take part in the mission!” – “So it begins! Go, man! Show them what you can do!” (boy from PC3 – appendix:3, PC3:3.4). As Martin and Ruble (2004) argue, once children identify their gender group, they tend to form broad impressions and assumptions about similarities within the gender groups and about distinctions between girls and boys. In their references to experimental studies, they explain that children have been found to use people’s sex to develop ideas and make statements about them. For example, due to gender stereotypes, a boy may not talk to a female fellow citizen because he believes that they do not share the same interests.

In the case of the students under investigation here, this example is extended, as the boys seem to “undervalue” the role of girls and by extension, of women, which means that they refuse to even perceive the possibility of a girl taking on/imitating a male role. During various discussions I had with the teacher by the end of the two first workshops, she claimed that she found her students to be guided by their habitus and a combination of gender images and related attitudes, which their community cultivated over the years. As she explained, for them it is important to have strong boys in their community – which is what, according to Noland (2009) would constitute the signifier – and this is revealed through their physical condition – the sign. As she pointed out:

“If their appearance and attitude do not reflect this, they consider themselves and the others needless or even useless. It is not enough for them to believe this; they want others to believe it, too. What matters most to them is what other people think, a distinct characteristic of small

societies. This premise reflects the character of this microcosm and the tyranny of the values promoted through the years” (third class teacher interviewed on 23/04/2012).

The teacher’s comments are also associated with Goffman’s (1969) theory of identity and its connection to the dramatic effect. According to this theory, the self is an effect of a performance, the way in which we present ourselves in everyday life:

“When an individual plays a part, he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the tasks that he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be” (Goffman, 1969, p.28).

Identity is therefore projected at the others (i.e. the audience at a theatrical performance) with the purpose of conveying self to them. Much like the male students involved in this study, people, or performers, may be totally absorbed in their own act and seriously believe that the version of reality they are projecting is actually correct (*ibid*).

At this point, it is important to note that the girls in this class were rather generally skeptical, thoughtful and, more confident to claim that a person, no matter if it is a girl or a boy, has the same chances to survive or die when joining a mission – taking into consideration that neither of them is well prepared or trained

to do so. This discussion, which featured the exchange of ideas and arguments between girls and boys, was important for the clarification of the given data of the story and for the realisation that it is important to be open-minded to make the right decision. As the teacher noticed,

“it was at that moment that the boys agreed for the first time with the girls that the mission was indeed dangerous and there was need for a very determined person to join; in other words, they tried to support their minds with arguments rather than just saying that the boy could manage it because he is a boy, as they used to say before” (third class teacher’s comments by the end of the second workshop, 02/05/2012).

This is indicative in the part of the conversation illustrated below:

❖ **Example (appendix:3, PC3:2.7):**

Boy 1: *“As a boy, he can get sick but he will definitely manage to pass the ravine.”*

Girl 1: *“I think we should allow the girl to go because they have the same chances of getting sick. After all, the girl is more determined.”*

Boy 2: *“Hmm... Looking at it from a different angle, maybe we should send the girl, because she is the one who was taking care of their parents... She probably loves them and suffers more than her brother.”*

Girl 2: *“Who cares if it is a girl or boy? What matters is that she wants to help her parents compared to her brother who seems to be rather hesitant.”*

Boy 3: *“Her brother is the one who needs to go... Girls need to stay by their parents’ side... This is the right place for a daughter... Now, their parents are ill, and seeing as how the protector of the family is the boy, he must go to the mountain. After all, boys have more muscle strength.”*

The drama workshops also became sites where all students were invited to try on and test roles, including roles associated with (their) gender construction. Through imaginative play (appendix:3, PC3:3.4), the children were encouraged to explore and understand gender roles within the wider social drama context and to challenge not only their own thinking but also the way their classmates were thinking. On various occasions (appendix:3, PC3:3.4; 5.3), the children had to work in groups, which were mixed-gender on purpose: by stressing the diversity of opinions held by the students, I aimed to get them to acknowledge the existence and impact of various alternatives in real life and the importance of respecting other people’s ideas when it comes to seeing an issue objectively.

One instance of group work was when we used flashback to decide who should finally join the mission (appendix:3, PC3:3.3). The children had to improvise on alternative scenes about the experiences that a boy or a girl might have in the mountains; interestingly, three out of the four groups came up with similar scenes (i.e. the girl or the boy facing challenges either from the beginning or at the end of the mission or being able to overcome the difficulties and achieve their goal). Conversely, only a group that consisted of more boys presented a scenario that favoured the boy (the boy managed to support his team, regardless of

the difficulties along the way) while the girl was portrayed as making some graceful efforts in the beginning but eventually giving up.

In the reflection participants made on the meaning of the imagined events, they stated the similarities and dissimilarities related to the scenarios for either the girl and the boy and the importance of being able to think of alternative possibilities. This was significant because a mutual dialogue was created and all the children seemed to be willing to express and support their opinions with arguments, thus deconstructing most of the stereotypes they presented before. This may draw a parallel with McGregor *et al.* (1977), who state that by working with possibilities or hypotheses, participants try out various approaches (responses and reactions) while they are also given the opportunity to develop and increase their understanding of social reality and how they could react on both symbolic and real levels within an imaginative context. Essentially, through acting out several roles and employing alternative points of view, *“their reactions can help them become more aware of a wider range of people and how they behave, than they might otherwise encounter in their everyday life”* (ibid, p.31). Especially here, where most of the children initially doubted the equal roles and potentials the two genders have, the opportunities for collaboration and interaction seemed to be vital in realising, if not rejecting entirely, the stereotypes they held. This impression was made more explicit when asking them to choose only one child (girl or boy) to proceed with the story. That was when they agreed with one of their classmates, who said: *“Miss, what’s the point? No matter who goes, the possibilities of joining the group of braves are equal”* (girl from PC3 – appendix:3,

PC3:3.5).

In attempting to establish the veracity of the above argument and ensure it was not just a spontaneous response, I spoke with the boys (interview held on 24/05/2012) who seemed hesitant during the drama process. Their responses illustrated that some of them had made connections with what they heard from their classmates during circle time or from the girl's hot-seating. In this way, they supported either the possibility of allowing a girl to take a risk and take part in a mission or to provide both the girl and the boy with the same chances to do so. However, two boys identified with their friends' arguments or took a random stance because they (see Boy 4 and Boy 5 in the example below) dismissed this as a drama activity, which does not necessarily reflect real social roles (Aina & Cameron, 2011).

❖ **Example (appendix:3, PC3:3.5):**

Antri: *"So, boys, I am not sure whether you honestly wanted the girl or the boy as a protagonist at the end of the story..."*

Boy 1: *"Let's go with the girl, Miss... We realised she has the same chances as the boy... Let's give her the opportunity and then we'll see how things turn out."*

Boy 2: *"We made a huge fuss about who should go up the mountains... Let's send Margarita since she wants it so much and she can defend her arguments."*

Boy 3: *"For me, it seems the same... I need to respect what the majority votes for."*

Boy 4: *“I am not sure, but I will support my friends’ opinion... Let’s see what the girl can do in the game, because in real life they are useless.”*

Boy 5: *“If the others said they will support the girl, I will also do it... I prefer the boy though... I will always believe that boys can do better.”*

Concerning the incidents and extracts noted earlier and their association with ideas of challenging stereotypes that occurred during drama class and the general approach I used, I would like to make connections with issues of freedom, voice and critical understanding as found in Maxine Greene’s theory (1993; 1995; 2000a,b; 2001). According to her, education should provide children with opportunities to challenge and override, when necessary, the given and be open to accept that they can at least try to look at things as if they could be different or can change. Similarly to the purposes of the drama scheme for PC3 presented here, I aimed at firstly challenging the participants’ pre-existing attitudes and thinking by encouraging them to acknowledge other possibilities; secondly, urging them to attempt to discover alternative ways of approaching things that break with the habitual and the routine, and open up space for critical thinking and understanding; and helping them formulate their actions and praxis in such ways that allow for the expression of freedom, in other words, allow their voice to be heard (*ibid*). As presented from the above analysis, however, most of the children were still unable to exhibit distinct critical thinking skills and dispositions. As their class teacher in a casual recorded conversation put it:

“Their experiences in these drama workshops were just a step towards the approach of issues, events and characters in a way that could help them cultivate their critical thinking. I acknowledge the fact that their responses were more carefully planned and thought out than what I expected; they developed step-by-step and modified the way they responded while considering and valuing their classmates’ freedom to think and share their ideas. At the same time, they tried to be open-minded and proceed to action, regardless of whether they were successful or not” (third class teacher’s comments in a casual post-workshop interview on 25/05/2012).

5.9. Exploring Children’s Responses in Terms of “Voices” and “Choices”

5.9.1. Introduction:

In this section, I will offer evidence from my fieldwork in relation to the participation of the children, who were encouraged to express their voices and actively engage in drama activities designed to promote various elements of critical thinking, as described above. The issue of voice in and out of role was of paramount importance for this study – and is closely linked to the above references to certain pedagogies and conventions – hence I have chosen to examine the way children and their teachers perceived the contribution of the former. I also aim to provide a more general platform for the analysis of the children’s responses which pointed in the direction of those dispositions learners need for the enhancement of their critical thinking.

5.9.2. Re-considering Children’s “Voices”

In his book, *“A Place Called School”*, John Goodlad (1983) sheds light on the reasons for which students consider schools to be dull places: not only does their role entail passively listening to their teachers talking for the better part of the teaching session, but also they are expected to complete the tasks assigned to them in a rigidly defined way. While I was conducting observations prior to the drama workshops at the three schools, I witnessed what Goodlad (1983) described first-

hand: most teachers seemed eager to control their students' right to speak and expected them to sit silently during classes and complete various tasks in pre-determined, predictable ways. It was only during the 30-minute breaks that the students could freely express themselves and vent their energy in the playground. The teachers themselves admitted that they were forced to adopt this "safe" practice, so as to be able to effectively meet the standards set by the national curriculum, given the time limitations and the demands of teaching children between 9-12 years.

These circumstances gave rise to the following questions: firstly, could critical thinking skills be enhanced in any other way if not through speech, play and the cultivation of relevant skills and dispositions? Secondly, who among these students were considered as critical thinkers, who were not and why? Finally, was the teachers' evaluation of the children's critical thinking capacity reflected in the drama workshops? As noted above, my aim was not to verify the teachers' evaluation or to measure the children's critical thinking; nor was it to compare their performances before and after the workshops and record how this changed. Rather, it was to explore how drama might be seen to set a framework for the cultivation and promotion of critical thinking through participation and systematic interaction. Interestingly, some children who were considered to be critical thinkers due to their overall scholarly performance not only tried to answer the questions I posed at the first workshops first, but they strove to answer what they thought would please the teacher, disregarding the class contract (explained in subchapter 5.6.1.1) which stated that there were no right or wrong answers. This

attitude was more typical of the first two workshops; during the next ones, the children seemed to begin to realise the value of the contract; they also came to understand – through the way the dialogue developed – that they should take time to think about their ideas before sharing them.

By the same token, some other children who were not identified by their teachers as “critical thinkers” (see subchapter 3.1.1) actually exhibited elements of critical thinking within the drama workshops. This highlights the importance of the chance all students were given to voice their ideas when they wanted or felt confident to do so and after considering and evaluating what other students had said before them. This was evident in their responses in drama (when, for example, they were referring to their classmates’ ideas with the intention to add, compare, agree or disagree with whatever was stated before) and in their interviews, as well those of their teachers: *“was happy to see most of them listening very carefully to other opinions and responding by using ‘key’ words or sentences that their classmates had used, in order to elaborate on their classmates’ arguments, challenge them or persuade them to adopt an opposing viewpoint”* (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012). Gibbs and Gambrill (1999) argued that critical thinkers do not take things at face value but, instead, they question what others take for granted, elaborate on the data they are given and evaluate their accuracy.

Interestingly enough, some of the less confident children, or those considered as underachievers – for instance, those whose native language may have not been Greek – performed unexpectedly well: despite their underdeveloped

oral skills, they were still able to communicate their thoughts with relative clarity and confidence and to make their own contribution to the way an issue was perceived. One such example was Sarah (PC2), a relatively new student, who, in spite of the language barriers she faced in terms of vocabulary and grammar, consistently participated actively, sharing her arguments and explaining her ideas in the most accurate way possible. This is illustrated in the following example, which refers to the children's interviews (01/06/2012) at the end of the "Missing girl's disappearance" workshops. Here, the children had to reflect upon the story and establish the factors that defined the course of the story. Sarah's contribution¹⁴ to the dialogue was quite interesting:

❖ **Example:**

Antri: *"So, if somebody asked you to think of the reason or the action that turned this story into such an unpleasant adventure, what would you say?"*

Girl 1: *"I think that things started going wrong the moment Agapi decided to keep a secret diary, where she wrote all these stories involving a complete stranger."*

Antri: *"Hmm... Lots of children keep personal diaries. Are you suggesting that the problem is the diary itself or her relationship with Mr Xenarides?"*

Girl 1: *"Both."*

¹⁴ Sarah's grammar/vocabulary mistakes have not been rendered into the English translation. It should be pointed out that the translation process inevitably edited any possible grammatical and/or lexical inaccuracies.

Sarah: *“I do not agree that the problem was the diary. The problem was that Agapi trusted a stranger; I’m sure that if her parents knew, they would not allow her to see him because she is minor and they are responsible for her.”*

Boy 1: *“Yes, but she was deceived: he said to her that he is a friend of her parents and gave her a present; a tablet is a very impressive present. We do not know how we’d react if we were that poor and somebody offered us such an expensive present.”*

Boy 2: *“He is right. Mr Xenarides planned this very carefully. However, that’s how strangers usually approach children: by offering them something. Everybody – at least we – know that these things happen and we are more prepared. I am not sure whether she was too innocent or irresponsible or whether Mr Xenarides was so sneaky that anybody could fall in his trap.”*

Sarah: *“I agree with my classmates: she may have been confused or not have realised his sneaky plan. However, if we consider their relationship and her actions so far, it becomes clear that she overlooked important evidence: a stranger approaching her, buying her a very expensive present, telling her not to say anything to her parents and the most obvious one: lying about having a daughter. Who would agree to secretly meet this person? There are many similar incidents taking place in reality; we should not only think that there are many bad people out there, but there are also children who do not know what to say or how to react in similar cases as well as parents who have no idea about what their children do or how they behave. There are many mentally unstable people out there; children*

who are unaware of these dangers or do not know how to react or do not act properly; and parents who do not care or have illusions about their children's lives and are in denial about how the society functions in general."

As I noted later in my diary, Sarah was an "interesting phenomenon" according to her teacher:

"When I first interviewed Sarah's class teacher, she stated that she considered her a very clever child who is quite mature for her age. However, the teacher said that Greek is not Sarah's native language and she has only lived in Cyprus for a short while. She may also have been bullied by some of her classmates. All these factors may prevent her from actively participating in the dramas, especially because I am a teacher she is not familiar with and that drama is a new context for her. However, the teacher did admit that Sarah is quite brave, always tries her best and never gives up; to observe her take part in drama would be an 'interesting phenomenon'. As time passed, Sarah became more and more active, sharing her ideas in a way that impressed me and her teacher; although she often made lots of language mistakes, she constantly tried to repeat or explain her point and asked her peers for help. Sarah's engagement was interesting, not only because she exhibited enjoyment and confidence but also, because she was trying to exploit that time "as if she was taking advantage of the freedom to express her voice in the way she wanted". Being open and reflective minded, defending her

arguments, making comparisons, referring and making connections with all available data are elements that proved that she took her participation seriously and could be seen as a movement towards critical thinking enhancement” (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012).

5.9.3. The Impact of Choice, Freedom and Safe Learning Environment

In their interviews, the class teachers emphasised the importance of their students’ feeling safe to voice their ideas in a playful context, knowing that I, as teacher-facilitator *“was not going to reprimand them for being themselves...”* (first class teacher interviewed on 24/03/2012) and that *“their ideas were considered and taken seriously”* (*ibid*), *“independence was encouraged”* (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012) and *“choice was given high priority”* (third teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012). As the second class teacher pointed out:

“You showed them that you listened to them and you encouraged them to share their ideas... It is that little bit of encouragement that enhanced their confidence, captivated their interest and made them take that extra step” (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012).

Indeed, in the drama workshops, I attempted to encourage the children to share their opinions through positive reinforcement, with phrases such as, *“Well done!”*, *“This is a very good idea”*, *“I know that all of you are very intelligent pupils. I would like to listen to your wonderful ideas”*. This aimed at recognising

their contribution in public, and making them feel valuable and special, so as to enhance, to the maximum possible extent, their confidence and willingness for participation (Plummer, 2001, p.16).

This dynamic was clearly identified and discussed by the children who participated in this project; these children consistently explained that the fact that they had a "voice" or "say" had been a critical element, which determined their engagement and participation in the drama workshops:

“During the drama workshops, we could speak our minds and express what we felt... All of us were given a chance to do so... and that made me feel good about myself because I never really get to do that in class, unless I am lucky enough to raise my hand first” (boy from PC1 interviewed on 24/03/2012).

“During class, the teacher usually has one or two students answer each question and then moves on to the next one. If we want to add something to what was said, the teacher will typically say ‘there’s no time to listen to other ideas’, which means we are never given the chance to share our own point of view. Here we were encouraged to say different ideas—we found that quite exciting!” (girl from PC1 interviewed on 24/03/2012).

“The difference here is that you didn't tell us how to think or what the right answer should be like. We just had to find it by ourselves! It was our voice, our thought, our idea!” (boy from PC2 interviewed on 01/06/2012).

“Thank you for the choices we got to make or whatever made us feel valued” (boy from PC2 interviewed on 01/06/2012).

“During the role-plays, you let us choose our position or which character we wanted to be. You made us vote and make our own decisions” (girl from PC3 interviewed on 08/06/2012).

In a similar vein, the teacher of PC3 commented:

“It really surprised me that they embraced the freedom to choose and make a decision. It was something I was always afraid to try with them; they are usually reluctant to cooperate. To be honest, I was almost sure disorder and noise would prevail. The fact that you let Elias¹⁵ decide whether he wanted to join the drama actually made the idea more appealing. He wanted to ensure that the plot and the overall approach were to his taste and as soon as he felt ready, he asked you to take part in the group. Boys here don’t participate in role-plays and the like; they consider them girlish. However, the fact that he was not forced to join, in combination with the joyful element of the project made him more than willing to actively participate in the imaginary context of your story” (third class teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012).

In general terms, asking the children to work in groups on the basis of the drama contract was quite effective for the purposes of encouraging children to

¹⁵ Elias was a boy from PC3 who, at the beginning of the sessions, refused to take part in the drama workshops for his own reasons. Based on the ethical considerations underpinning my project I asked all the children to participate only if they wished to. There was also the option to observe the sessions without taking part, while the choice of joining us at any point was also available.

develop their thinking through their interaction, cooperation, agreements and disagreements. However, by comparing the children's contributions in combination with the related evidences of critical thinking as they appeared in group work, it seems safe to conclude that these were found in their interactions in circle time¹⁶. According to the Crick Report (1998, p.3.3.10), “[d]eveloping confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities” and “developing good relationships,[...] between people” can be regarded as the main benefits of Circle Time.

Regarding her participation in class and, in particular, the process of enhancing her thinking, one girl from PC1 admitted that she was more confident and more willing to participate, take risks and share her opinions with her classmates, even though she was speaking in a low voice, as some children with low self-esteem do (White, 1992, p.48). Her class teacher said:

“I noticed that Circle Times helped A. in being more concentrated, paying more attention to her classmates and sharing expectably interesting and thoughtful ideas instead of engaging in other distracting

¹⁶ In my effort to collect and record the children's perspectives on the relevant issues under investigation, I made extensive use of the strategy of circle time for most of the discussion employed in and out of role in all three classes, parts of which have been presented in the above sections of analysis. The main reason for choosing this strategy was not only its practicality in terms of allowing everyone to clearly see and hear the others but, more importantly, the attitudes developed beyond that namely, the ideas of fairness and respect. There was no front or back, no beginning or end, no “best” or “worst” position but all of them, both the children and the teacher, were in an equally good place to engage in the various activities – these attitudes are prerequisites for the cultivation and enhancement of critical thinking (Zoller, Ben-Chaim & Ron, 2000).

activities, as she normally does” (first class teacher interviewed on 13/02/12).

An example of this girl’s responses (*girl:3) is illustrated in the discussion extract below.

❖ **Example: (appendix:1, PC1:5.6)**

Antri: *“Who do you think was the most unhappy person in the story and why?”*

Girl 1: *“I think it was the child, because all he did was to listen to everybody else’s ideas and decisions without being given the opportunity to voice his opinion.”*

Boy 1: *“I agree that it was the child because he was oppressed by the king and at the same time he suffered from psychological oppression, because he felt unwanted by society and a burden on his parents.”*

Girl 2: *“I agree. The child of the story couldn’t handle all that stress and pressure exerted on him; this was obviously the reason why he ended up cutting his ears... because of despair.”*

***Girl 3:** *“It is certainly hard: no child deserves to feel unwanted or ugly. And I agree that cutting off his ears was evidence of his despair. However, it might be unfair not to consider the position of his parents or even the king and the other citizens. I mean, his parents were in a difficult situation too. Although their dream of having a child finally came true, their king acted as their oppressor and forced them to either separate from their beloved son or leave their island, their*

home, their people. I am not sure whether the king was unhappy – I think he was mostly selfish and his ego was hurt, because his subjects went against his orders. On the other hand, I think that all the fellow citizens were unhappy: both those who supported the king because ‘they were in their own world’ without realising it and ‘were affected’ by his unfair approach and those who were aware of the facts but chose to enslave themselves in the service of their king, reflecting a common Cyprus tendency, the culture of ‘hush, now, it’ll pass’ [‘σιώπα να περάσουμε’ – siopa na perasoume].”

The observation notes on the responses showed that during Circle Times, the girl did not answer my questions immediately; rather, she waited for her classmates’ responses while she was trying to build her reply either based on prior knowledge or on her classmates’ replies. She also questioned whatever she found to be subjective and supported her ideas in the most objective way possible by taking into account all the characters’ position. This is typical of a person who is open-minded, fair-minded and has the ability to provide reasonable and just arguments. When I asked her which kind of activity made her think more, she replied “circle time”, because it gave her the opportunity to ponder, exchange ideas with the class and share her views freely;

“in circle times I could speak my mind the way I wanted, when I wanted, without being forced to follow what the others were saying. I really liked this and felt more valuable than when participating in other group works, where I sometimes was forced to accept ideas and take part in

performances I did not agree with fully” (girl from PC1 interviewed on 24/03/2012).

5.9.4. Role-Playing and Opportunities for Critical Thinking Enhancement

5.9.4.1. The Role of Alternative Characters and Contexts, Authenticity and Empathy

On a deeper lever, the promotion and search for evidences of critical thinking were embedded mainly in the structure of the drama workshops themselves. Essentially, the imaginative contexts and the drama conventions were applied so that the children-participants would acquire the expertise and have the possibility to play various roles while contemplating different perspectives and ways of deriving ideological, moral, psychological or emotional satisfaction. As the PC2 teacher pointed out:

“The fact that the children were invited to take on various roles – detectives, lawyers, policemen, psychologists or even those of Mr Xenarides, Agapi and her parents – caught their attention and provided them with opportunities to consider issues from different perspectives. This enabled them not only to judge the way certain characters acted but also, to actually be in their shoes and empathise with them when required in order to gain a deeper understanding. The fact that they swapped roles encouraged them to respond to the given situation in many different

ways and challenge their thinking more. This interaction improved their responses from role to role since they realised the importance of developing more reasonable arguments as time went by” (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012).

This harmonises with Coles’ (1989) argument that:

“[t]he whole point of stories [or role playing] is not ‘solutions’ or ‘resolutions’ but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles – with new protagonists and antagonists introduced, with new sources of concern or apprehension or hope, as one’s mental life accommodates itself to a series of arrivals: guests who have a way of staying, but not necessarily staying put” (p.129).

The children’s participation in role-play activities appeared to open up possibilities for the cultivation of critical thinking skills and dispositions that this project intended to explore and gave them the power to determine outcomes, change their opinion, and attempt to alter mine, in role, and demonstrate their point of view. In the interviews that were held by the end of the workshops on 24/03/2012, 01/06/2012 and 08/06/2012, the vast majority of the children shared positive thoughts about the experience, while their input focused on the contribution of role-play. It seems that role-play helped them understand the characters they impersonated, broadened their minds and developed their capacity to feel empathy for the actions, perspectives and feelings of others. A PC1 girl commented:

“We had the chance to be in other people’s shoes, face the same dilemmas and think twice before acting because we knew that our actions would impact the plot. This experience felt as if we could be others in a different reality and that we had to act responsibly to make the right decision. It’s one thing to observe a situation from a distance, as a member of the audience, and quite another to actually be the person involved in that situation” (girl from PC1 interviewed on 24/03/2012).

As the children pointed out, their experiences in role increased the level of empathy towards other people while at the same time they helped heighten their levels of consciousness about themselves, especially their perception of “self” in reality and the adjustment of that self in role:

“Being in the roles of various characters I felt as if I was that character in that reality. I had the same thoughts and feelings and I tried to decide upon those characters, when needed, considering what they should do in the story, comparing it with what I would do if I was in the same position in reality. Sometimes this was quite challenging, because some of these situations were entirely new for me, but it was a way of checking myself. I actually have the impression that I may be or can be more determined and active than I thought I was” (girl from PC1 interviewed on 24/03/2012).

Many children, such as this PC1 girl, referred to their sense of “self” being clarified as they had the feeling that they managed not only to gain new

insights but also, discover unexplored facets of themselves. This is relevant to the argument by Dickinson *et al.* (2006), according to which through a story and various roles in drama “*children learn that the social world is based on role*” (p.13). As Barton and Booth (1990) claim, “[i]f...a child assumes a role in a story and enacts particular situations, he or she begins to find personal meaning in it” (p.43).

Similarly, according to one of the teachers:

“The context in which they had to act and interact was full of symbols and meanings and could easily be connected with authentic moments of reality. Our children share elements with the characters of your story. For instance, they like playing outdoors, where strangers might approach or associate with them in various ways and that is when they need to make decisions and solve problems. It is important to help them ponder over situations instead of acting spontaneously and becoming more suspicious” (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012).

Important to the development of this understanding was the fact that all drama lessons were designed in response to the children’s needs, interests, life experiences and lessons. The children identified the “real-life” contexts as necessary in stimulating their curiosity and interest, and in motivating them to make contributions and think in alternative ways. The “real-life” contexts appeared to enhance many elements of critical thinking under the conventions applied, and particularly, the dispositions relevant to them; “[a]s the children are

posed problems which relate to themselves in the world, they become more challenged and motivated and show greater commitment” (Freire, 1970, p.62). Thus, the utilisation of issues and situations with which children had some familiarity (i.e. discrimination: *“it was easy for me to be the oppressor. I was just pretending I’m a member of my family”* or kidnapping: *“Miss, back in my country, Romania, many children have disappeared under similar circumstances”*; girl from PC2, interviewed on 21/05/2012) helped them to bring their background knowledge into their problem-solving process and build new understandings on their existing ones; *“drawing on personal experience supports a richer connection to the story [and role plays] and the potential for a more thorough understanding of the[ir] text and subtext”* (Kelin, 2007, p.278).

On the other hand, the implementation of several “real-life” roles and situations with which the children were unfamiliar (i.e. the roles of detectives or jury) also appeared to inform their understanding of the world beyond themselves and help them think of perspectives they might otherwise have ignored or been unable to examine in a real-life situation (Iaquinta & Hipsky, 2006, p.210; Ewing, 2010, p.41). Below are some relevant comments made by a PC2 boy and a teacher:

“I always dreamt of being a detective because the problems my family or my teachers ask me to solve are easy, boring or repetitive and predictable. This gave me the chance to be more active, to work towards an aim and to realise that to solve a case one needs more than one idea. In specific, the case of Agapi who disappeared was quite challenging

because it made me think of how serious this problem is in reality. Personally, in the past I reflected on mysteries of missing people but I never thought these cases were so complicated – I came up with possible solutions and that was all” (boy from PC2, interviewed on 01/06/2012).

“By situating problem-solving processes in real-life contexts that combine both familiar and unfamiliar elements – such as the role of detective or the context of kidnapping [...] – kept their interest alive. On the one hand, they felt confident to bring in information and experiences from their background knowledge, whilst on the other hand, it was intriguing for them to combine these elements with their imagination and instincts in order to explore events and characters in many different ways. While attempting to solve a problem in the best possible way, they had to employ, to mention a few, the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation, which I consider prerequisites for the cultivation of their critical thinking” (second class teacher interviewed on 01/06/2012).

Of equal importance was that, experiencing imaginative role-play helped the children to question and develop stances towards the issues under discussion and to express their views, concerns and emotions while appreciating that this experience was *“not an escape from reality, but a return to it”* (Neelands & Goode, 2000, p.41).

A relevant comment was made by one of the teachers:

“Looking at the process of drama here and the issues that actually derive

from real life, the children made connections with their realities, found themselves in that context but more importantly, experienced the fact that in order to cope with those realities, sometimes you have to think deeply and long, and hope that you take all the necessary information into account, make the right decision and react properly. And that's exactly how we should act in life; that's a life lesson" (third teacher interviewed on 08/06/2012).

5.9.4.2. The Safety of Drama Roles as a Motivational Tool towards the Enhancement of Confidence and Other Dispositions Related to Critical Thinking

Fleming (2001), in his book *"Starting Drama Teaching"*, claims that drama provides children with the opportunity to raise their confidence and motivation to take risks through role-play *"within the safety of a mask"* (p.40). As Neelands (2004) concurs, through the mask, a sense of security is developed and thus children feel comfortable to express themselves without worrying about the *"dangers of disclosing the private to the public scrutiny of their peers and teachers"* (p.39). Although not always referred to as such, this *"safety net"* (*ibid*) was alluded to in the children's and their teachers' interviews; in fact, the children appeared more confident and active while in role compared to their participation out of role. As a boy from the first class stated,

“When I played the role of the father who had to decide whether or not he should follow his king’s orders, I had to be more determined and say more things in order to defend my family. Never mind, we could say that this character might represent those people who are oppressed and are afraid of saying or doing many things, regardless of whether or not they are right” (boy from PC1 – appendix:1, PC1:4.4).

This boy’s words could be supported by Wagner’s (1999) theory according to which,

“[...] students can act out in symbolic form their real fears, hatreds and desires without having to actually “own” them: They can hide by saying it was only the character they were playing who felt that way” (p.12).

With regards to the general performance of the children, as it was observed by their teachers, it seemed that it was not hindered by embarrassment or concern about making mistakes, perhaps because they thought these mistakes were part of the role. According to Marsh (1990, p.11), children seem to be more confident while being in role and do not mind so much if they make mistakes since, mistakes and non-acceptable behaviours are being disguised under the veil of the role.

What is more, some children with learning difficulties appreciated the opportunity the workshop offered them to mime, form still images or participate in dialogue with other characters, insofar as they could contribute and express their thoughts in alternative ways. For instance, although a girl from PC1 made

mistakes in Greek during her performance in *Forum Theatre* in the third workshop (appendix:1, PC1:3.3), she continued performing her role as King without being embarrassed, as everybody expected her to be. On the contrary, while performing, she talked loudly and made exaggerated gestures, in keeping with the argument by Dickinson *et al.* (2006) concerning children, especially those with low self-esteem, and drama. According to them, these children may avoid public expression of their ideas and feelings because they feel self-conscious or afraid that the “important others” will make fun of them; when, however, they take part in drama, they adopt roles that allow them to feel free and “*imagine themselves differently*” (p.14). This is also in accordance with the second class teacher’s opinion that through role-play children could “*identify personal abilities that they did not know they had*” (second class teacher interviewed on 13/02/12), which significantly boosted their confidence, and developed self-awareness and positive dispositions.

Comparing evidence of the children’s critical thinking in relation to their contributions in role and out of role and with respect to their gender, as stated in the previous section, it became evident that the girls seemed to take their roles more seriously, whereas many of the boys seemed to approach their roles as an opportunity to have fun and expose their creativity. As I recorded then in my diary:

“The children seem to be very motivated every time they need to take on roles. They find it exciting that they need to utilise their bodies and employ facial expressions as well as words or responses in order to be convincing. They tend to be very creative and sometimes quite

spontaneous, so much so that at times they forget to justify their responses with arguments. This mainly happens with the boys; the girls seem to be more thoughtful and at the same time expressive in every step of their performances, enabling us to follow the process of their thinking and the extent to which it was critical” (diary notes on 20/05/2012).

These characteristics were evidenced not only in role-play situations but also, in moments of dialogue in circle time, when the girls appeared to be able to communicate their thoughts in a much more advanced and reasonable way than the boys, who struggled with expressing themselves. Interestingly, however, they were inclined to provide more profound replies, especially in the very first workshops. The girls were generally more open-minded and willing to think of alternatives whereas the boys, especially those from PC3, tended to rely on prior knowledge and experiences; essentially, the challenge towards the enhancement of critical thinking was created and reinforced by the strong stereotypes they held. This point is further explored in subchapter 5.8.2, where I discuss the way I confronted the lack of cooperation due to gender and cultural stereotypes and how I attempted to create space for critical thinking through drama. However, the vastly controversial issue of gender is not within the scope of this study. Observing the way in which girls or boys responded does not imply that in drama, children always behave in certain ways according to their gender – though these observations might be related to contrasting biological¹⁷ or feminist¹⁸ theories of

¹⁷ Based on Gardner’s (1983) theory of Multiple Intelligences that approaches the issue of gender biologically, young children’s learning is dominated by symbolic (words/numbers), iconic (pictures) and kinaesthetic (movement) learning, whereas the level of each representation may

gender and its effects on cultural performance.

5.10. Summary

This chapter focused on the approaches and conventions I used to encourage children's critical thinking as conveyed through their voices or in combination with embodied expressions *in* and *out of role* within various drama schemes. Emphasis was given to the impact of the democratic and playful elements of the drama workshops and to my attempt to identify the presence and forms of critical thinking skills, dispositions and stances on issues of the children's immediate concern. Combined data derived from the participants' responses during the workshops, as informed by their comments in their interviews, their teacher's points of view, my research diary notes and the casual conversations with critical friends, showed a movement towards the enhancement of elements of critical thinking. In the case of the third primary school, the issues of gender and

differ according to each person's personality or even gender. From a biological point of view, these discrepancies come into existence in the very early stages of the embryo's development, when sex hormones begin to influence brain development. This engenders a distinct overall growth, namely the left side of the brain, responsible for the ability to use language and connected to verbal and written ability, develops sooner in girls; in fact, infant girls tend to talk earlier than boys and their language development is far superior to that of boys throughout childhood (Fenson *et al.*, 1994; Gabriel & Schmitz, 2007). On the other hand, boys thrive through kinaesthetic learning, which is in accordance with their need to use of space, play, physical activity, or even aggressive behaviours (Hale-Benson, 1986).

¹⁸ The arguments about the biological nature of genders can be directly juxtaposed with feminist theories, according to which gender differences derive from cultural influences. Judith Butler (1997, p.49) introduced the idea of gender as performativity, whereby all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and as she states, there is no existence that is not social); in what this means, people are said to "do" gender. Commenting on Butler's theory, Salih (2002) argues: "[G]ender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a "doing" rather than a "being"" (p.62).

stereotypes emerged as a major challenge in my attempts to present opportunities to enhance critical thinking.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

6.1. Overview

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on my project as a whole, concentrating on the rationale and core stages of this research study, and summarising my key findings. In what follows, I reflect critically on my project, elaborating on the conclusions derived from this project, and seeking to highlight the contribution of this study both to theory and research. Methodological limitations are also presented, along with possible implications for policy, practice and further research.

6.2. Summary of this study

This study emerged as a result of my eagerness to explore the potential of using drama as a means to enhance children's critical thinking skills, combined with the identification of gaps in existing literature pertaining to the area of critical thinking in education and the field of drama, and lastly my belief that drama pedagogy can be an innovative and motivating way for teachers to teach and learners to learn.

My research project was conducted in three public primary schools located in different areas in Cyprus and involved 59 Greek-Cypriot nine-year-old children who participated in eight 80-minute drama workshops and in nine 80-

minute interviews. Their teachers' comments were also recorded during three 80-minute interviews. I combined the methodologies of a collective case study research with three units of analysis, which were informed by the elements of ethnography and reflective practice to answer the question: "*What happens when I teach participatory drama to upper primary students in Cyprus with the intention of enhancing their critical thinking?*" Additional related sub-questions included: "How can critical thinking be framed by drama conventions?"; "How can I, the teacher, shape drama pedagogy to engage students' critical thinking?"; "How can I, the teacher, use stories in order to engage students' critical thinking?"; "How do students respond to the process? Why did they respond in this way?"; "How can we recognise instances of critical thinking in drama as they are happening?"; "Is there any evidence that some children think more critically when they are emotionally engaged?"

My role was that of an active participant practitioner-researcher and the research methods, which were used in tandem or individually, were observation, interviews, practitioner's reflective journal, comments and notes from critical friends and drama conventions. These research tools helped me to explore the ways in which drama can frame critical thinking, the way children responded and the extent to which their social and learning experiences and backgrounds appeared to underpin these responses – in combination with various constraints and the overall interpretation of the related data – as were discussed in the analysis chapter.

The collected data was analysed qualitatively based on predetermined and emerging categories within the interpretative paradigm. One of the key aims of my

data analysis was to present not only the desirable results or responses – those, for instance, which would attest to the consistent success of drama in enhancing critical thinking elements – but also the failures or ineffective aspects of this endeavour. This is the reason for which, in my analysis, I adopted Neelands’ (2004) proposal to employ a pedagogic premise as “*a process of continuous transforming and (re)shaping of who we are and who we are becoming*” (*ibid*, p.53). It is this philosophy that underpinned this project and the way its findings – either the more extensive ones, which were presented in the entire analysis chapter, or the brief key findings presented in the following paragraphs – were approached, highlighting such processes, their limitations and importantly, the need for continual development and consideration.

6.2.1. Children’s Voices and Choices

My project underlined the significance of encouraging children to make choices, and express and communicate their voices in and out of role; these voices were viewed as critical elements which determined the children’s engagement and participation as well as the enhancement of their critical thinking in the drama workshops. The aim was not to verify or measure the children’s critical thinking ability; nor was it to compare their performances before and after the workshops and record how these had changed. Rather, it was to explore how drama might be seen to set a framework for the cultivation and promotion of critical thinking through participation and systematic interaction, elaborating on related collected data.

As shown through the interpretation and analysis of data, drama can contribute to the enhancement of children's critical thinking capacity on account of its very nature (see subchapter 6.1.2. for details). The application of pedagogical principles – such as the establishment of the drama contract, group work, discussion in Circle Time, the use of praise and encouragement, games and the overall playful character of the workshops – in the context of drama had a significantly positive impact. Apart from motivating the children to participate energetically in the classroom, it helped them enjoy their interaction, boosted their confidence and made them appreciate the fact that they were considered worthy and equal members of their class community. What is more, it encouraged them to listen to each other, assume levels of expertise and responsibility and express their ideas in a thoughtful way, exhibiting characteristics in the direction of critical thinking.

It is through this framework of thinking that children improved ways of making their reasoning visible, going beyond recalling or restating previously acquired information, keeping distance from whatever they were presented with, questioning ideas and stances that might have been taken for granted, providing evidence or logical arguments in support of their statements, choices, or judgements and thinking of multiple or revisited ideas and perspectives. These evidences of critical thinking development (Castoriadis, 1987; Moon, 2007) helped enrich, thus, previous research and other more general statements on drama pedagogy (Heathcote, 1984; Nicholson, 2005) and determined the development of the sessions.

As stated in the analysis chapter, these skills, dispositions and stances were not developed straight away, due to the lack of basic behavioural skills (such as those of following rules, cooperating with each other and respecting their classmates) as well as linguistic skills that some children exhibited (such as going beyond the given data and explaining their choices and ideas in more depth). However, it is important to note that the pedagogy and the above-mentioned conventions contributed to the development and improvement of these skills to some extent. The evidence presented in the analysis showed that critical thinking defined within the concerns of critical pedagogy was reinforced satisfactorily in response to particular tasks and contexts, such as those designed for the purposes of this project, because of the opportunities given to children to question or challenge problematic situations, make inquiries, interpret works and engage in various creative tasks, confronting critically their roles as critical citizens who are able to exhibit democratic values and behaviours.

Although the children were able to work on these effectively as a community and I was able to create a more fertile space for the enhancement of several elements of critical thinking, these skills were only partially developed, of course. Time limitations were certainly an inhibiting factor; still, firstly, the cultivation of critical thinking is an on-going process that requires constant elaboration on issues in depth, and secondly, there is no solid evidence that, if time and other relevant conditions had been more favourable, the research would have yielded the desired results, namely the development of critical thinking traits.

6.2.2. Drama Context and Conventions

There is evidence that the stories on which the schemes of drama work were based provided the context and the space for dialogic exploration of various social issues which interested the children, such as those of diversity (PC1), bullying (PC1), kidnapping (PC2), gender (PC3) and citizenship (PC1-PC3). These contexts went beyond the agenda of didacticism that the educational system of Cyprus often promotes when it comes to the use of stories in story time or within the context of other modules. Therefore, as stated more extensively in the previous chapters, for the purposes of this project, an alternative approach was applied, which placed emphasis on motivating children to think, act and express themselves in various ways. This was done through their engagement in several conventions which were designed to promote:

a) the development of a critical stance (subchapter 5.6. discusses the case of PC1, in which the children were encouraged to consider: (i) the decisions and actions they took beforehand as citizens of the island who held unfavourable attitudes towards the child and his family, (ii) the clash of the citizens with their king, and (iii) the conflict this story caused within the community when they were asked to express their opinions as regards the child's decision to cut his ears) and the articulation of informed questions (i.e. in the case of PC2, in which the children interviewed Mr Xenarides about his intentions to approach Agapi – subchapter 5.7.4. – or in the case of PC3, in which they asked the girl-protagonist of the story about her decision to join the brave people on the mission).

- b) the experience of learning ways to think logically and decide when and what methods or strategies to use in order to deal with a situation (subchapter 5.6.1.3. presents the case of PC1, in which the children shared ideas on *Forum Theatre* and tried out alternatives in order to change the situation of oppression the main characters were in).
- c) the analysis, synthesis, evaluation and comparison of information (subchapter 5.6.1.6. discusses the case of PC1, in which children were encouraged to improvise scenes to find alternative versions of the story's endings).
- d) the detection of problems (PC2 children had to think of the reasons that had made Agapi follow Mr Xenarides, [if in fact she had done] and decide whether such issues were of importance to contemporary society).
- e) the requirement of evidence (PC2 children had to work as expert detectives and seek evidence that could provide answers related to the case of Agapi).
- f) the discovery and use of the best explanation (subchapter 5.8. explores the case of PC3 children, who were invited to choose between either taking the ill children back to their homes or leaving them behind, as the law dictated).
- g) the enhancement of the children's self-awareness, and the improvement of their honesty, discipline, open-mindedness, reflective-mindedness and fair-mindedness (as in the case of PC1, in which children had to discuss their improvisations and their relation to real life contexts – or in the case of PC3, in which they were encouraged to improvise alternative scenes about the experiences that a boy or a girl might have in the mountains).

The use of stories was found to stimulate the children's participation and many of the above-noted critical thinking skills and dispositions in various moments throughout this project due to the unexpected and compelling elements that every session involved, both in the sphere of imagination – *voice in role* – and that of reality – *voice out of role*. The fact that the children had an impact on the way the stories unravelled each time, in combination with the space given to take risks, challenge issues, make inquiries and think how they would react in comparable real-life situations was noted as a meaningful context of reference when reflecting on the attempt to enhance critical thinking in these children. Their responses were useful, as they offered me *authentic data* for my research, and helped me in terms of shaping and reflecting on the dramatic work in relation to the extent and the type of critical thinking elements they exhibited.

The children responded to my questions thinking of possibilities, making broad hypotheses, often building on their classmates' contributions, whilst clarifying, reasoning, negotiating, identifying problems and solving problems, especially within "*what if*" and "*as if*" contexts, assuming fictional roles and co-creating meanings and ideas. The regular use of open-ended questions – in the context of the community of inquiry – in terms of challenging, clarifying, critical approaching and processing seemed to provide the children with opportunities for the cultivation of imagination, critical stances and attitudes, as well as multiple hypotheses and viewpoints. This finding is in keeping with previous research findings that discuss the importance of using questioning in the development of children's thinking (*ibid*) and adds to the argument that possibility and reflexivity,

which are inherent in questioning, along with feedback, are key ways of approaching critical thinking.

The expression of the children's voices *in role* within the various "*as if*" drama contexts and the distinct drama conventions that I applied to each class were also useful in providing me with *authentic data* related to the role of both the drama pedagogy and drama conventions – with emphasis on the role-playing element – in the enhancement of the children's critical thinking. Through this process, the children enjoyed a sense of satisfaction, practised working with and listening to others and exercised their ability to empathise with other people: the children displayed empathy in-role but also out of role, in an endeavour to reflect on their open-mindedness and their ability to transform and imaginatively shift from what they were to what they might become. There is a plethora of work focusing on critical thinking in the literature, and some of it does make a connection between elements of critical thinking (e.g. possibility thinking) and empathy. However, the relevance of empathy and critical thinking (comprising a blend of abilities, stances and principles) is mainly theoretical, and therefore largely untested on a practical level. This was mainly the scope of this research, which essentially filled a gap in the literature: to study whether it is possible to enhance, through drama, critical thinking, and its constituent parts.

Here it is important to note that, although the children showed elements of critical thinking while enjoying the process of role-play and playful learning, their unfamiliarity with the drama-centred approaches was a hindrance. Contrary to what some of the teachers thought, the problem was not that teachers would lose

control or that the process would breed disruptive behaviour on the part of the children. Rather, the challenge was to use the enjoyment drama offers to motivate the children to participate while at the same time ensuring that this process was not treated merely as entertainment. To inspire students to focus on the task at hand, exhibiting a combination of creative and critical thinking elements, I assigned responsibility to the children in the role of the characters of the stories through several drama conventions, such as those of *Teacher in Role* and *Mantle of the Expert*. I also reminded them frequently that their contributions through various roles would be of paramount importance for the way the story would develop according to the characters' arguments, decisions and actions. At the same time, I attempted to encourage them to participate energetically using both their minds and bodies to respond to various questions I was posing, either in role or out of role, or even to stand back from whatever was presented to them in order to pause and revisit a situation.

The combination of body and language seemed also to work for the enhancement of critical thinking, since features such as self-questioning and questioning of other people's ideas, reflection, imagination, intentional action and self-determination appeared regularly, both verbally and physically. The related data presented here reveal alternative ways in which both children and their teachers might interact and cultivate their thinking on the basis of dialogue and body language. In particular, facial expressions and body movements were employed (for instance, in the context of still images, games or improvisations and other drama conventions), providing in this way some ideas for approaching

embodied learning for the purposes of critical thinking enhancement. Embodied learning, which falls under the umbrella of holistic learning and the element of modelling children's thinking, was of paramount importance in this project, but it is a relatively new field that remains to be explored in the future as far as its implications in on-going critical thinking pedagogy.

6.2.3. The Impact of Stereotypes on Critical Thinking Enhancement: the Case of Gender

The third unit of analysis (PC3) explored and discussed in the analysis chapter of this thesis unveiled the impact of gendered stereotypes that boys mainly had in the construction of the children's self-concepts (in relation to their important others, such as their family, peers and community) that might prohibit the enhancement of their critical thinking in one way or another. Aiming to challenge such stereotypes, as explained in subchapter 5.8.2, I attempted to disrupt gender divisions by encouraging the children to reconsider, as well as to take roles and positions that did not correspond to their pre-held models of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, in terms of exploring what happens when applying drama for the purposes of critical thinking enhancement, the analysis part of this thesis presented and discussed how children responded to several issues and dilemmas. It also explored the ways in which they were encouraged to be open-minded, reflective-minded, fair-minded, to identify problems and stereotypes, hold a critical stance, analyse and synthesise the data given, evaluate the characters'

decisions and actions, and solve problems considering various possibilities and alternatives while being invited to take both feminine and masculine “as if” roles.

Reflecting on the children’s – and especially the boys’ – engagement and participation in these drama workshops, it was evident that despite the initial resistance to challenge their pre-held concepts, some of them demonstrated identifiable elements of critical thinking. Some examples were: making logical arguments, thinking of alternatives and imagining possibilities. Some boys appeared to follow passively their peers’ views (for instance, to accept that a girl might take the same initiatives as a boy) just because the majority of the boys did so and they did not want to deviate from the norm. Nevertheless, an important point to be made is the fact that, regardless of the way the children responded, either at the beginning or the end of the sessions, and the extent to which they presented elements towards the direction of critical thinking, all the children acknowledged that this experience had made them question their beliefs and the world around them. Nonetheless, although it was possible to challenge gender stereotypes through drama in this work, this was done only up to a degree; to explore this possibility further, much more work would need to be done in a more extensive project, for example, one designed for the purposes of a related PhD or educational research in the future.

6.3. Research limitations

6.3.1. Particularities of the Study

This research project was a qualitative collective case study with three units of analysis. As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, this methodological choice was dictated by the exploratory nature of the questions being set to achieve the goal of this study. By definition, qualitative case studies seek intensely and exhaustively to examine all the issues within the bounds of a research study that is often too delimited to attain a thorough understanding of each single part and, as a result, the number of participants is unavoidably small (Merriam, 2009, p.43). Thus, because this study has focused on particular people in a particular context and period – no matter if the public primary school classes that participated in the study were randomly selected groups – its findings cannot be generalised. And this is because it is impossible to be sure that the findings of this research are completely indicative of how other children, in other schools, in other areas, would respond to these particular schemes of work.

The findings presented in the chapter of analysis are therefore not to be understood as transferable to other classroom contexts. As with any group of individuals, the particular attitudes, behaviours, context, and children's engagement in enhancing their critical thinking through drama are particular to the participants in this study and may not fully represent a similar group in a different place or time. As Cohn and Kottkamp (1993, p.229) state, because teaching and learning are human endeavours open to personal interpretation and fallibility, it is

quite possible that different conclusions would be reached if some of the variables changed.

However, it is important to note that the lack of generalisability does not eliminate the applicability, the scope and the value of this study as a point of reference for policy makers and other (drama) educators who are interested in enhancing critical thinking in their students. By exploring, describing, explaining and interpreting the impact of drama on children's critical thinking cultivation and development, as realised in the learning environment of these particular units of analysis, this study sought to provide insights into the nature of the drama process and into its possibilities in other classroom contexts that might share common characteristics. Conversely, it could serve as a source of ideas on how to approach critical thinking; these ideas might be modified according to the context of the research.

6.3.2. Time Constraints and the Impact of Several Factors

The findings yielded from the short period in which the drama workshops took place revealed elements of critical thinking or tendencies towards it as they were manifested in the children's responses in the context of the drama. If I had the chance to repeat this study for a longer period of time, and work with the children on a regular basis, I would possibly be able to explore in more depth the ways in which drama can enhance critical thinking in children; I could also study several factors that might affect this. This is because, apart from the more

extensive interactions I would have with the children, I would be able to establish whether drama applied for longer periods of time could identify more elements of the children's social reality (including school, family and society). This reality, which is a major parameter influencing their way of thinking and acting, could be exploited in the context of drama.

Additionally, I assume that the improvement of behavioural skills (e.g. following rules and cooperating), linguistic skills (e.g. explaining ideas more thoughtfully) and thinking skills (e.g. going beyond surface beliefs, pre-held ideas and stereotypes), all of which are indispensable elements of the pedagogy applied for the enhancement of critical thinking, could be further achieved if we had more time at our disposal. In this regard, not only would further approaches be applied, but also more data would be gathered through a combination of methods. As stated above, one limitation of my methodological approach is the length and number of the interviews with the children: in total, there were only three 80-minute group interviews. Essentially, although I tried to interview all children at different points according to their responses in the drama sessions, providing them with opportunities to interact with each other and to develop further ideas, I trust it would be of interest to also apply personal interviews, which would enable me to compare the findings with those of the group interviews.

6.4. The Potential Value of the Research for Others

“At its best, teaching, like life, is a process of learning more about ourselves and sharing that expanded wholeness with students so that they may become more unified. It is a process of finding out who we really are so that we can grant the space to others to find themselves” (Centred teacher cited in White, 1992, p.3).

The findings of this research could be useful to drama teachers/researchers such as myself, insofar as they can help to develop future practices in using drama as a medium for students’ critical thinking enhancement through various drama conventions while they encourage them to use both their bodies and minds. However, as stated earlier in this thesis, teachers interested in their students’ critical thinking enhancement and, by extension, in their holistic development should know that drama is not in itself enough; in order to achieve this goal, teachers should rely on a combination of drama and other forms of pedagogy (Way, 1967, p.3). As Neelands (2004) mentions,

“[d]rama cannot, of course, of itself teach in any kind of way, nor can it, of itself be powerful. It is what we do, through our own human agency, with drama that determines the specific pedagogy and specific powers [...] of drama” (p.48).

It is important not to look at educational drama as a panacea or as a means to accomplish for various educational objectives, such as critical thinking. A child’s lack of abilities, disengagement or negative attitude in class will not

automatically transform into competence, active engagement and positive attitude merely because they have played a role in a drama session. It is the whole experience and culture of regularly working with drama, the pedagogy, actions, approaches and interaction, reflexivity, playfulness, motivation, imagination, creativity (all inherent in drama) in relation to the children's agency that can lead them towards that transformation (*ibid*).

The necessity for children's critical thinking enhancement and the potential drama has to act in this way, as pointed out in this study, can also be of value for the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, as a justification of why drama deserves a place in the Cypriot educational system either as a medium or as a distinct subject. Now, perhaps more than ever, this issue merits consideration, as the place of the Arts in the Cypriot educational system is currently one that has been provoking spirited debate. According to the modifications of the educational policies the ministry is trying to implement, critical thinking is viewed as having primary importance, but the Arts, including drama, art, music and dance, are marginalised based on the premise that more time should be spent on modules such as Greek and Mathematics.

The evidence yielded in this study can be used by fellow teachers as a pool of topics and ideas for the enhancement of creativity and critical thinking in their classes, as it fosters holistic engagement, collaboration and openness amongst children and their teachers – as required by school policies (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture Website, 2015). These ideas might also be of interest for policy makers in other countries, in which school curricula target the development

of critical thinking and creativity in all levels of education, yet they do not provide specific suggestions about how to cultivate them. This could be addressed through in-service training and continuous professional development in the use of drama as a medium in teaching and learning. Personally, I would be very interested in sharing ideas and training teachers in the future for the purposes of heightening their potential to develop their pedagogy using drama to enhance their students' critical thinking capacity through creative ways or even, to tackle emergent issues – i.e. gender, prejudice, bullying – that educational systems across the world should find ways to cope with.

6.5. Suggestions for further research

While explaining the features of a qualitative study research, Edwards (1989) states that

“such research is inevitably hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing. Its promise lies in its potential for making the dimensions of any problem much clearer and better defined” (p.322).

Taking the importance of critical thinking enhancement into account, this study raises questions for further exploration related to the potential of drama in achieving this goal. In many ways, this research aspires to be like a reference point for the use of educational drama in children's holistic cultivation and, most importantly, in encouraging them to share their voices and to think

critically in various contexts. Indeed, in the domain of drama education or in general education, there is an on-going discussion about the potential of drama to help children express themselves; however, as noted in the introduction of this thesis, what is missing is thoroughly contextualised drama research in terms of critical thinking cultivation.

Far from supplying conclusive answers to the way drama might be used to achieve the above, this study is a contribution to this discussion. In fact, it provides an informed, thought-out contribution which is reinforced by data, as one of the multiple perspectives to be taken into account in approaching this area of study. This study also invites other perspectives to further reveal the various viewpoints of the subject, specifically in the context of Cyprus, where educational drama and its integration into teaching and learning (at all levels) are new fields, especially in conjunction with critical thinking enhancement.

I suggest, for example, that further research should be conducted to establish whether the children's responses could reveal different elements (in terms of depth and variety) of critical thinking within various drama contexts and with the application of alternative strategies and conventions. These could be designed on the basis of a more longitudinal study which would require the participants' engagement on a regular basis and for an extensive period of time and could explore the extent to which changes in the children's critical thinking capacity are ephemeral or cross over to non-role-play circumstances.

In addition, it might be of interest to explore what happens when using drama for younger or older children using various strategies and conventions for

the purposes of critical thinking, or even to seek age-related factors (in terms of language, understanding, maturity) that might work in favour of or against this attempt. Additionally, it would also be worth considering the ways in which teachers perceive and approach critical thinking towards that aim.

Another possibility for further research is to examine the area of drama, gender and critical thinking and the way several primary school classes – where differences could include class, ethnicity or locality – respond to the same drama scenarios. This would allow for an examination specifically focused on the impact of cultural difference on the use of drama for the purposes of critical thinking.

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APPENDICES

*** See Chapter V – Analysis for an in-depth presentation of the activities

APPENDIX 1:

Outline of lesson plans for the first unit of analysis (PC1)

PC1 – Activities for the 1st session (PC1:1)

1. Warm-up games (name games)
2. Creation of a drama contract
3. Walking in the designated space while listening to mysterious background music
4. Introduction to the story - *Teacher in role* as chief of a camp group
5. Narration
6. Circle-time: discussion of the story
7. *Thought-tracking* on the characters of the story (What is the couple's attitude towards the child?)
8. Circle time (discussion of the previous activity - connections with reality - preparation for the next activity)
9. *Decision alley* (Will the couple keep the child or not? Why?)
10. Closing of the session (final thoughts on the workshop - closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

PC1 – Activities for the 2nd session (PC1:2)

.....

1. Warm-up games (“pass the clap” ; “move as I say”)
2. Recalling the drama context as explored in the previous session
3. *Narration - Teacher in role* as a chief of the group
4. Circle time *in role* (discussion in role and out of role about the case of the child with the long sharp ears)
5. Preparation of *role-play* based on the way different people of the island reacted towards the child and his parents as soon as they were informed of his existence.
6. *Role-play* in which the teacher takes on the role of the parents while the children are acting out the reactions of other parents, other children, family friends, the clergymen and the king.
7. *Improvisations* from groups of children on possible plot twists.
8. Circle time: discussion on the previous activity and connection with real life in general and specifically, in the context of Cyprus.
9. Closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1

PC1 – Activities for the 3rd session (PC1:3)

1. Warm-up games: a) “Standing out from a crowd: being the “other” / b) “Servant and Boss” Follow-up discussion on children’s reactions and choices
2. Recalling the drama context as explored in the previous session
3. Preparation and trials of *Forum Theatre*
4. Discussion of the trials of *Forum Theatre*
5. Closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1

PC1 – Activities for the 4th session (PC1:4)

1. Warm-up game: “Mime the word in circle”
2. Recalling the drama context as explored in the previous session
3. *Forum Theatre*
4. Circle time: discussion of Forum Theatre and connection with real life.
5. *Defining the children’s place in the designated space* – follow-up discussion of the children’s choices
6. Closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1

PC1 – Activities for the 5th session (PC1:5)

1. Warm-up game: “Fire, squirrel, earthquake”
2. Recalling the drama context as explored in the previous session
3. *Narration*
4. *Still images* from groups of children on how the story might continue based on the children-islanders’ reactions
5. Circle time: discussion on the two previous activities and connection with real life in general and specifically, in the context of Cyprus
6. Correlation with the theme of isolation presented in the book: “The red tree”
7. *Interactive narration*
8. Closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1

PC1 – Activities for the 6th session (PC1:6)

1. Warm-up game: “Find the key to your freedom”
2. Recalling the drama context as explored in the previous session
3. *Role-play* and *improvisations* in groups: coming up with an appropriate story ending on the basis of the given data
4. Circle time: discussion (out of role) on the previous activity in relation to fictional and real context.
5. Closing the game and thanking the children for their participation and contribution.

APPENDIX 2:

Outline of lesson plans for the second unit of analysis (PC2)

PC2 – Activities for the 1st session (PC2:1)

1. Warm-up games (name games, “pass the clap”, voice games)
2. Creation of a drama contract
3. *Teacher in role* as a chief detective presenting the case of a girl’s disappearance to her colleague
4. *Mantle of the expert*: exploration of data given from groups of investigators-children
5. Circle time *in role* – discussion of various incidents and possible courses of action
6. Circle time out of role: discussion on possible interview candidates, and possible interview questions (assigned as homework)

PC2 – Activities for the 2nd - 3rd session (PC2:2-3)

1. Game: The red carpet (modified to fit the context of the session)
2. Recalling the previous session using *role-play*
3. *Mantle of the expert*: working in groups of different experts and preparing questions to pose to interviewees for the purposes of solving the mystery.
4. *Teacher in role* of some of the interviewees
5. Circle time: discussion of the data collected
6. Moving still images on possible scenarios behind Agapi's disappearance – follow-up discussion
7. Exercises for recovery (Taking off the 'suits' of the role - Game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

PC2 – Activities for the 4th session (PC2:4)

1. Game: “Assassin”
2. Recalling the previous session using role-play
3. *Narration*
4. Follow-up discussion in circle time
5. Group work: improvisation on how Mr. Xenarides approached Agapi – follow-up discussion in circle time
6. Group work: drawing the outline of two human figures (Agapi-Mr. Xenarides) on paper and attempting to define their external features as well as their character
7. Game: Twist 8,4,2,1
8. *** *Writing in the role* of reporters about the way the story has developed so far (assigned for homework)

PC2 – Activities for the 5th session (PC2:5)

1. Game: “Detectives in the dark”
2. Recalling the previous session using *role-play*
3. *Narration*
4. “*Whoosh*”
5. Circle time: discussion of the content of previous activities
6. Group work: preparing questions for Mr. Xenarides’ interrogation using *role-play*
7. Game: Twist 8,4,2,1

PC2 – Activities for the 6th session (PC2:6)

1. Game: “Hey, you”
2. Recalling the previous session using role-play
3. *Hot-seating* Mr. Xenarides (*teacher in role*) – follow-up discussion.
4. The *teacher in the role* of Agapi presenting her experience
5. Circle time: Empathy with the characters
6. Game: Twist 8,4,2,1

PC2 – Activities for the 7th and 8th session (PC2:7-8)

1. Warm-upgame: “Zip Zap Boing”
2. Recalling the previous workshop
3. Circle time: discussing the case of Agapi’s disappearanceand hypothesising on how the story might end.
4. *Storytelling* in groups: children take the role of reporters and present a short TV news report. This sheds light on what actually happened based on the evidence and includes a scene which illustrates what should happen to Mr. Xenarides and why.
5. Circle time: discuss all the ideas presented.
6. Closing the game and thanking the children for their participation and contribution.

APPENDIX 3:

Outline of lesson plans for the third unit of analysis (PC3)

PC3 – Activities for the 1st session (PC3:1)

1. Warm-up games (name games, “pass the clap”, voice games)
2. Creation of a drama contract
3. Walking in the designated space and freezing when asked to create several still images (i.e., a person who is ill, pensive, strong, angry)
4. Improvisations in groups: the typical behaviour of girls and boys expressed through moving images
5. Circle time: teacher plays the role of the advisor of the chief of the island. The class must address the need to organise a mission to save their ill co-islanders by getting them medicine and deal with the case of a girl who wants to join.
Follow-up discussion
6. Work in circle time and then in groups to decide on questions for the girl’s hot-seating
7. *Hot-Seating the girl* – Follow up discussion (in role)
8. Exercises for recovery (Taking off the ‘suits’ of the role - Closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

PC3 – Activities for the 2nd session (PC3:2)

1. Warm-up game: “Walk, Stop, Jump, Clap”
2. Walk in the designated space under various conditions (extreme temperatures, fatigue, encounter with a snake on the way, rocks falling down, slippery terrain)
3. Still images of a sad girl, happy boy, determined person, desperate person
4. Circle time: recalling the previous session and making a decision in role of wise men of the island
5. *Narration* using the strategy of “*Whoosh*”
6. Thought- tracking on the image of the girl and a young person after several unsuccessful attempts to cross the road.
7. Circle time: discussion on the two previous activities (out of role) and considerations about how the story might unravel
8. Exercises for recovery (Taking off the ‘suits’ of the role - Closing game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

PC3 – Activities for the 3rd session (PC3:3)

1. Warm-up game: “The incredible ich”
2. Circle time: recalling the previous session and sharing thoughts about the way characters should react
3. *Flash back* to the mountain scene – follow-up discussion in circle time.
4. *Role-play* in groups: exploring hypothetical experiences that the girl or the boy might have during the mission
5. Circle time: discussion on the previous activity (The discussion is held in and out of role and concerns what the courageous people should do and the consequences their decision may have
6. Exercises for recovery (Taking off the ‘suits’ of the role - Game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

PC3 – Activities for the 4th session (PC3:4)

1. Warm-up game: “The law of power”
2. Circle time: Recalling the previous session
3. *Storytelling*
4. *Writing in role* about the child who is harmed on the way to the mountains -
presentations by some of the children’s writing – follow-up discussion
5. *Decision alley*: “Keep the child or abandon it, as the law demands?” - Follow-up
discussion
6. Exercises for recovery (Taking off the ‘suits’ of the role - Game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

PC3 – Activities for the 5th session (PC3:5)

1. Warm-up games (“The Red carpet”; “The bomb”)
2. Circle time: recalling the previous session
3. Group *role-play* about alternative endings (Discussing how the story should continue: save the ill people or leave them behind? Did the islanders welcome the mission team?).
4. Circle time: discussion on the alternative endings in relation to human values and laws.
5. Exercises for recovery (Taking off the ‘suits’ of the role - Game: Twist 8,4,2,1)

APPENDIX 4: The Drama Contract

Drama Contract

- 1. Be polite, kind and show you care**
- 2. Put your hand up if you want to speak**
- 3. Listen when someone is speaking**
- 4. Be patient and wait**
- 5. When the teacher puts her hand up you have to**
 - ✓ look at her**
 - ✓ be quiet and**
 - ✓ put your hand up**
- 6. Do your best all the time**
- 7. Remember: There is no right or wrong in drama**

APPENDIX 5:

Sample Interview Questions

These questions were posed while interviewing the children from PC3:

- Do you think there was a gender-related difference between the two people (girl/boy) we've tried to send to the mountain mission? Do you think the boy should act as the representative of his family? Why?
- The chief was sick, like the girl in the beginning of the story. However, your reaction towards these two individuals was different. On the one hand, you decided we should let the girl die because, as you said, she had been warned of the consequences of her decision. In the case of the chief, however, you said that we had to save him. Why?
- How do you think the girl felt after she was told she cannot come with you?
- To what extent was the young people's decision affected by social views?